

ABSTRACT

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NAVIGATING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: AN
EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF THE SCHOOL
BUSINESS MANAGER IMPLEMENTATION

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This case study explored the conceptualization and actualization of the school business manager position in one school district. The study sought to identify the tensions that emerge when traditional norms of school leadership are altered to reflect a more shared approach to leadership and how principals and school business managers navigate those tensions to enact their roles.

Through qualitative methods and case study design, the study examined the initial implementation of the role from the perspective of three school business managers and three principals. Semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observation of school business manager meetings were used to collect data. Leadership theory, shared leadership in schools, and micropolitics served as the theoretical perspectives that guided the analysis of data.

The study found that tensions that arose included principals' difficulty in ceding control, discord associated with differing leadership styles, and issues of trust. The study also found that principals were more likely to navigate these tensions by relying on strategies associated with their authoritative role while school business managers were more inclined to activate influence strategies to mediate the tensions.

NAVIGATING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF
THE SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGER IMPLEMENTATION

By

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Dedication

“For the Family”

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Chapter 1: Introduction

School Leadership

Principal leadership is a critical component of effective schools (Branch, Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012; Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 1998; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Segiovanni, 2000). While principals have always been essential to the running of schools, the tasks implicit in the job have become more numerous and complex. Contemporary principals are no longer deemed successful for merely facilitating the day-to-day operations of their buildings. Managing the “business” of schools is now only one facet of the role of the principal (Copland, 2001; Danielson, 2007; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005; Donaldson, 2006; Elmore, 2000; Firestone & Reihl, 2005; Fullan 2001; Hallinger, 2003; Hargraves & Fink, 2006; Lambert, 2002).

While “there was a time” when “principals could be successful by primarily emphasizing good management skills,” (Harris, 2005, p. 1), the demands on school principals have changed dramatically since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (Donaldson, 2006; Elmore, 2008). Chronicling the dire state of education, the report served as an impetus for reform efforts that continue to shape the current educational landscape. Policy decisions in the past few decades have focused on the proliferation of standards-based accountability measures that have secured the role of principal as the nexus for student achievement. The *No Child Left Behind* legislation and *Race to the Top* initiative have amplified expectations on principals to develop school cultures for continuous improvement in teaching and learning. As

instructional leaders, principals must now create the conditions that ensure that not just some or many students achieve, but that all students demonstrate proficiency on rigorous academic standards. Public school principals must employ a broader range of skills than previously needed in order to address the increased academic expectations for all students, the threat of sanctions on school personnel for students failing to meet predetermined targets, and the heightened public scrutiny actualized through legislation. To meet the array of demands implicit in the job, contemporary public school principals are required to be “educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, and experts of legal, contractual, and policy mandates, and initiatives” (Devita in Davis et al., 2005, p. ii).

Given the range of expectations of the position, traditional, hierarchical leadership that has focused on the principal as the single, “heroic” leader has become insufficient for meeting the demands of today’s schools and the students they serve (Donaldson, 2006; Harris, 2008; Lashway, 2002; Spillane, 2006). As the role of principal has become increasingly challenging, educational theorists and researchers have proposed a more collaborative approach to decision-making and allocation of responsibilities in school organizations through models of shared or distributed leadership (Elmore, 2000; Gronn, 2003; Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership is touted by theorists as a means to tap into the expertise of many in the school organization instead of relying on a single individual, namely the principal, to address all the complexities of contemporary educational systems (Elmore 2000; Gronn, 2003; Harris, 2005;

Lashway, 2002; Spillane, 2006). While distributed leadership is primarily concerned with the sharing of leadership between two or more individuals, it is understood in educational settings not merely as the delegation of tasks, but rather interdependent efforts among individuals to support organizational goals (Harris, 2005; Lashway, 2002; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004).

Current school leadership and reform literature is replete with the ideal that authority and responsibility should be shared more broadly beyond the office of the principal (Elmore 2000; Gronn, 2003; Harris, 2005; Lashway, 2002; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 2006; Marzano, Walters, & McNulty 2005; Spillane, 2006; Spillane et al., 2004). While distributed leadership is situated in research as a heuristic framework for understanding leadership (Gronn, 2000; Spillane et al., 2004; Spillane, 2006) educational practitioners in K-12 schools have largely adopted it as a prescription for practice (NASSP, 2007). Efforts to share leadership in schools are frequently equated with changes to the traditional organizational structure of schools and several models have emerged for accomplishing this goal. Models of shared leadership in schools include a number of configurations including co-principals, increasing the number of assistant principals, adding coordinator positions, department heads or instructional coaches, professional learning communities, site-based councils, and school leadership teams. The school business manager initiative proposed by the Maryland State Department of Education is one such strategy for more broadly sharing leadership at the school level.

School Business Manager Recommendation

In 2000, the Maryland State Department of Education endorsed a task force report that advanced a practice for facilitating the shift in the principal's role from a predominantly managerial position to a more focused instructional leadership role. *The Maryland Task Force on the Principalship*, a report compiled by researchers and practitioners in consultation with state education officials, proposed the addition of a school business manager position to support principals in K-12 public education settings. The impetus for this recommendation was the belief that in order to focus on instructional issues for improved student achievement and thus improved school effectiveness, principals had to be able to "clear the plate" of some of the traditional managerial tasks that impede their ability to allocate time for leadership (MSDE, 2000, p. 6). Specifically, the task force recommended that the school business manager assume responsibility for duties not directly associated with instruction such as "manages school's accounts; supervises the school plant and cafeteria" (MSDE, 2000, p. 10). In effect, the proposal called for making a clear distinction between instructional leadership and management in the school environment.

A group convened by the governor in 2009 to study the critical shortage in principal candidates in Maryland reiterated the necessity of providing principals with time to devote to teaching and learning. The committee's findings summarized in the *Governor's Principals' Task Force* echoed the previous recommendation for the school business model and added that school business managers should serve as a member of the school leadership team (MSDE, 2009). This additional component suggests that the school business manager not only represents a new model for the division of labor associated with school administration but that the position also

contribute in some capacity to the decision-making leadership in the school organization. As such, it has implication on the traditional norms of how authority is enacted in schools.

School Business Manager in Lewis County Public Schools

During the 2001-2002 school year Lewis County Public Schools, a small rural district in Maryland began to explore the possibility of implementing the MSDE recommendation for the school business manager position. The assistant superintendent for instruction and the assistant superintendent for administrative services made a joint presentation to the superintendent on the potential efficacy of the role in supporting principals' instructional leadership capacity. Citing their own working relationship as an example of how the model could be conceptualized for replication in school contexts, they secured approval to develop an action plan outlining a timeline and steps for possible implementation.

The district administration made several efforts to engender support for the initiative prior to putting it in practice. This included initially presenting the concept to building-based administrators to determine their interest in the position. Noting sufficient interest, they established a committee to develop a preliminary job description that was reviewed and then endorsed by all county principals. The district then sought principal volunteers to initiate the position rather than mandating its implementation. This netted eight principals willing to pilot the position in their schools the following year. These principals conducted joint interviews and then selected the candidate of their choosing to actualize the position in their respective schools.

Despite the cautious planning and inclusive nature of the selection process, the first-year implementation of the school business manager position in Lewis County Public Schools suggests that unforeseen tensions emerged as the role was actualized in specific school contexts. Of the eight initial hires, two were dismissed by midyear and two others requested reassignment at the end of the first year. While district leadership characterized these occurrences as “misfires” in the hiring process, the departures underscore the conflict that emerges when the democratic ideal of sharing authority and responsibility converges with the reality of well-established organizational hierarchy of schools. While the assistant superintendents conceived of the principal and school business manager dyad resembling their own working relationship as regards the allocation of tasks and collaborative decision-making, they neglected to factor in the dynamic that emerges in relationships where one individual occupies a subordinate position in the organizational structure. In such circumstances, the sharing of authority becomes more complex than merely reassigning work tasks.

Research Problem

The recommendation for the school business manager position responds to a well-documented need to alleviate principals of the non-instructional tasks that interfere with their time to focus on instructional leadership (Danielson, 2007; Davis et al., 2005; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; MSDE, 2009; NASSP, 2007; Tirozzi & Ferrandino, 2001). As a structural change, implementing the school business manager position is relatively easy to accommodate by revisions to an organizational chart. However, how it becomes operationalized within the

contexts of specific school organizations is much more nuanced. As in most organizations, authority in schools is distributed hierarchically, primarily residing with the principal. Any change in the configuration of school authority, such as the introduction of a school business manager position, has the potential to challenge the normative expectations of school leadership. As Flessa (2009) notes, “When leadership is distributed in ways that are in tension with taken-for-granted scripts of school administration, when the interpersonal and professional relationships of adults change, it would be quite surprising if no conflict resulted” (p. 337). Change inevitably sparks conflict in organizations as the agents involved experience the uncertainty inherent in adapting to new norms of practice. While the push for more collaborative or shared leadership is pervasive in education literature, there has been little focus on the tensions and ambiguities that emerge as a result of the role redefinitions and the ensuing need to negotiate the new relationship among the actors involved. Failure to acknowledge the tensions and negotiations required in this new leadership configuration has the potential to undermine change initiatives that impact power dynamics. Power relationships are a significant, yet often overlooked component of school reform efforts (Blasé, 1991; Hargreaves, 1991).

Contemporary educational theory and research on shared or distributed leadership presupposes that the intent to reallocate the traditional authority of schools actually occurs in such models. Simply changing power configurations does not necessarily equate to a transformation in the authoritative reality in school organizations. There is a gap in the literature on school leadership in terms of whether or not the ideal of collaborative authority in schools is actually accomplished with the restructuring of

roles. Research suggests that while such a paradigm is widely espoused, educators have perceived few indicators of the traditional hierarchy of schools actually progressing into more shared structures (Court, 2003; Louis et al., 2010; O'Toole, Galbraith, & Lawler, 2002). A lack of focus and understanding of how authority is actually reallocated invites the possibility of superficial changes in the power structure in the name of egalitarian ideals. It also disregards the fact that in some cases actors, especially those with the most power to lose might actually seek to protect their own interests by overtly or covertly resisting the alteration.

Research Purpose

This case study explores the complex relationships that emerge in operationalizing the school business manager position. In particular, the study examines how principals and school business managers work through the initial phase of negotiating their roles and responsibilities, navigating tensions that may emerge as authority is redistributed in the new organizational structure. The intent is to make visible the process of creating and defining new leadership roles within school contexts, identifying the real life relationships between principals and school managers not just the structural relationship defined by the organizational chart, policies, and procedures. The study also seeks to determine how, or if, authority is actually manifested in practice rather than just as a leadership ideal, focusing both on the intent inherent in the creation of the school business manager position and how it is actualized in practice. While there may be some allure to the idea of shared leadership, the study seeks to explore how it is practiced in schools where the traditional model of top-down leadership is the norm.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How was the school business manager role conceptualized at the district level and how is it operationalized at the school site? Specifically, to what extent do principals and school business managers perceive that authority is reallocated?
2. What tensions emerge in the initial stages as principal and school business manager define their roles and relationship in their organizational setting?
3. How do principals and school business managers negotiate these tensions to operationalize their roles?

Conceptual Framework

A micropolitical framework is appropriate for this study as the introduction of the school business manager position invariably disrupts the taken-for-granted norms of power within schools. At a minimum, reallocating tasks creates a new dynamic for the organizational structure and interpersonal relations (Burns, 1978; Cyert & March, 1963; Pettigrew, 1973). Micropolitical theory offers a framework for exploring the relational and power issues faced by school leadership as they assume new roles and responsibilities and negotiate their place in the organization.

Public schools function in the “uneasy middle ground” that harbors bureaucratic structures yet espouses democratic intentions (Ball, 1987). As such, schools foster conditions for political activity to develop among the individuals and groups involved in its operations and thus invite analysis using a micropolitical model (Ball, 1987).

Recognizing the role of micropolitics within school contexts is essential for

unpacking the nuances of leadership and power relations among individuals within the organization. As a framework for study, micropolitics highlights the day-to-day interactions among individuals that provide a context for understanding the dynamics at play in an organization. A micropolitical perspective is especially salient when change alters the taken for granted norms of how schools and how the individuals within them operate.

While public schools have traditionally adopted a bureaucratic organizational model, micropolitical theorists have postulated that it is insufficient to rely exclusively on hierarchical power vested in formal authority to understand organizations and the individuals who comprise them (Ball, 1987; Blasé, 1991; Iannaccone, 1975; Lindle, 1999). Instead, micropolitical theory, which is grounded in the study of power defined as both formal authority and influence, is useful in unpacking the dynamics of school leadership (Blasé, 1991; Blasé & Anderson, 1995; Blau & Scott, 2003; Hoyle, 1982; Mechanic, 1962; Pfeffer, 1981; Yukl, 2006). Micropolitical theory seeks to expose the strategic use of power that individuals employ within organizations to secure their preferred outcomes (Pfeffer, 1981). Negotiating power dynamics is especially salient for study during periods in which change is initiated, as change itself is a catalyst for increased micropolitical activity. Often the tensions that emerge are hidden behind the dominant, normative discourse of policies and procedures associated with formal authority in schools. Micropolitics provides a framework for unpacking the nuances of interpersonal relationships that are the core of power dynamics in schools.

Research Design

This study was designed as an exploratory case study. Since there was no existent research on the implementation of the school business manager position, an exploratory study provided an approach from which to study the phenomena from multiple vantage points to develop an initial understanding of the model and its impact on school leadership. Research for this study began with an extensive review of literature relative to leadership, leadership in schools, and micropolitical theory. After identifying the participants for this study, individual interviews were conducted with the study participants. Additional data was collected through observations of school business manager meetings and a detailed analysis of relevant documents related to the role of the school business manager. Analysis of the data allowed themes to emerge relative to the tensions actors perceived in their specific contexts and the strategies they employed to navigate the initial stages of implementing the new organizational structure. A qualitative case study approach allowed for an in-depth analysis and description of this model of leadership practice in schools. The study methodology is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Research Significance

As local, state, and national legislation continues to demand higher standards and increased academic achievement for all students, the role of principal will continue to be a central focus for educational theory, policy and practice. Research suggests that principal leadership is a significant factor in the quality of schools and the academic achievement of students (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Nettles & Herrington, 2007). However, an increasing body of literature suggests that it is becoming impractical to expect

principals to accomplish all that is required of the position (Danielson, 2007; Davis et al., 2005; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; MSDE, 2009; NASSP, 2007; Tirozzi & Ferrandino, 2001). The impetus for the creation of the school business manager model is to foster principal effectiveness by alleviating principals of some of the tasks that impede their ability to focus on instructional leadership. This study contributes to the literature that seeks to explore new models of sharing school leadership, focusing specifically on the tensions such a structure initiates and how the actors involved negotiate potential barriers to change. Policymakers and practitioners consulting this study will gain a variety of perspectives on the dynamics that emerge as the traditional paradigm of leadership is altered.

This study also seeks to contribute to the theoretical understanding of authority and micropolitical strategies that emerge in school settings among actors during periods of change. A significant body of literature has been generated studying the micropolitics of schools relative to principals, teacher leaders, and interest groups. However, the school business manager presents a new position in which to test existing constructs of micropolitical theory.

Assumptions

Several assumptions grounded in literature informed the planning of this study. First is the belief that schools are political organizations and the individuals within them engage in frequent power dynamics and conflicts. Political behavior, however, is not considered to be a negative indictment but rather is understood as an opportunity for potentially meaningful change.

The second assumption is that leadership and power are inherently connected. Both concepts are contingent upon relationships between and among individuals contextualized in unique organizational settings. These relationships activate political dynamics as individuals enact their respective roles within school organizations.

Finally, this study also assumed that schools, despite efforts to the contrary, are fundamentally bureaucratic in nature with authority primarily residing in the role of principal and that efforts to modify the normative authority structure will initiate tensions.

Limitations

No matter how well designed, all research studies have inherent limitations (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). It is incumbent upon the researcher to identify the potential factors that might impact the results of the study. The following limitations are factors in this study:

1. The study pertains to only one school district's implementation of the school business manager position and is limited in the number of cases studied. The district's uniqueness and idiosyncrasies may limit the extent to which results may be generalized to other organizations, especially in light of the fact that leadership and authority are context specific. The purposeful sampling and small number of school business managers also limits the generalizability.
2. The time frame for data collection also limited the study. Leadership and micropolitical dynamics in schools are continually evolving as individuals act and react in concert with one another and the circumstances in which

they operate. Thus, the study may only be read as a snapshot in time and not as a totality of individual experience. The study focus on the initial stage of the school business manager position is also a factor.

3. An analysis of school business manager's roles and responsibilities was also limited to the perceptions of school business managers themselves and the principals with whom they worked. These limitations evolved as a result of the need to bound the study within a specific, manageable context.
4. Socially desirable response bias may be a factor that limits this study. Researchers Argyris & Schon (1974) have noted that practitioners often espouse certain organizational approaches, but rarely use them in reality. Thus the willingness of the individuals surveyed and interviewed to be completely candid in their responses rather than attempt to present what they perceive as the expected reality limited the study. Leaders in schools, in particular, may be susceptible to this, as their roles often require the positive presentation of self and the organization. This bias is compounded by the fact that individuals are often reluctant to articulate the power they have (Kipins, 1976).
5. Finally, the researcher is a principal in Lewis County Public Schools, and therefore was subject to bias in interpretation. Nonetheless, steps were taken to minimize bias in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data for this study. Such steps included soliciting peer reviewers, checking for accuracy and clarification with study participants, and thoroughly reviewing documents to triangulate the data.

Definition of Terms

Authority- Formal power that is legitimized through an official role or position

(Bolman & Deal, 2008; Gamson, 1968)

Distributed Leadership- A leadership model that shares responsibilities and activities across multiple roles and participants (Elmore, 2000; Gronn, 2003; Spillane, 2006). Distributed leadership is often used interchangeably with *shared*, *collaborative*, or *collective leadership* in the literature . This study does not seek to extricate the nuances of each construct, but rather uses the term to reflect the ideal of school governance that is a collaborative, mutually reinforcing process of influence among individuals and groups in an organization who share responsibility and accountability for achieving common goals.

Leader- One who “influence(s) or guide(s) and direct(s) the course, action, and opinion” (Selznick, 1957, p. 47). In schools, principals have traditional been designated as the leader.

Leadership Team- Decision-making group within a school. In the context of this study set in Lewis County Public Schools, it is comprised of principal, assistant principals, and school business manager.

Manager- One who “bring(s) about, conduct(s) or accomplish(es); to have charge or responsibility for” (Selznick, 1957 p. 47). Managers focus on tasks that facilitate the efficiency of an organization.

Micropolitics- the strategic use of power within organizations. “Those strategies by which individuals or groups within organizational contexts seek to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests” (Hoyle, 1986, p. 88). “The formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals

in organizations” (Blasé, 1991, p. 11).

Power- “the potential ability to influence behavior, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things that they would not otherwise do” (Pfeffer, 1981).

Principal- The authoritative leader of a school.

School Business Manager- School leadership position responsible for the non-instructional, administrative tasks in a Maryland public school.

Organization of Study

This study is organized into six chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the major context of the study and its intended purpose. Chapter two provides a review of the relevant literature that informed the study including leadership constructs and micropolitics. Chapter three outlines the research procedures utilized, a description of the population included in the case study as well as the instrumentation used. Chapter four provides a description of each of the cases as a means to describe the conceptualization and actualization of the school business manager model. It also addresses the first research question regarding the reallocation of authority. Chapter five presents the findings from the study relative to the second and third questions. Finally, chapter six summarizes the study and includes conclusions and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Overview

The purpose of the study is to explore the implementation of the school business manager position and the tensions that may arise when the norms of how authority is allocated in schools is altered with the addition of a new position to the leadership team. The focus of this chapter is to review the literature that informed the development of this study. Leadership is a complex construct that defies simplistic categorization, especially as regards its manifestation in organizational settings. This chapter begins with an overview of the distinctions made between leadership and management and the evolving leadership paradigms frequently employed by researchers to understand the phenomenon. This is followed by an examination of how leadership is contextualized specifically in school environments, including the current imperative for more collaborative leadership models. These two areas of focus provide a context for the potential tensions that emerge when specific leadership and management tasks are parsed out to specific roles within school settings. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the key component of micropolitics, the analytical lens employed in this study.

Leadership Management Dichotomy

One of the assumptions inherent in the Maryland State Department of Education recommendation for the addition of a school business manager is that there are discrete leadership and management skills and tasks within school organizations. Despite the quantity of research available relative to the phenomenon of leadership,

controversy persists as to how best to define it at the conceptual level and how to measure its effectiveness. So divergent are definitions in existing research that “there is almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (Stogdill, 1974, p. 259). Considering the complexity of values inherent in efforts to define leadership, it is useful to identify leadership as a multifaceted, complex process that incorporates a range of expectations and perceptions.

A significant body of literature suggests that leadership is exercised within a relational context. Bennis (1989) describes leadership as the process of an individual influencing another to behave in a certain manner. Fiedler (1967) sees leadership as directing and coordinating the work of others while Merton (1957) interprets it as an interpersonal relation in which people willingly comply with another. Rowden (1987) contends that leadership is the "ability to motivate or stimulate people" (p. 27), a definition consistent with Smith (1987) who notes that, "leadership is the direction and motivation of people to accomplish specific tasks" (p. 23). Cohen and Brawer (2003) define leadership more broadly as a “transaction between people, not a quality or a set of traits held by a person who is in a position of authority” (p. 136). Burns (1978) focuses on the relational aspect of leadership as well when stating, “I define leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations --- the wants and the needs, the aspirations and expectations --- of both leaders and followers” (p. 19). A leader is thus "one who commits people to actions, who converts followers into leaders, and who may convert leaders into agents of change" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 3). Yukl (2006)

defines leadership as “a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization” (p. 2). Northouse (2004) situates leadership as a process by which an individual influences others to achieve a particular goal.

Efforts to define leadership frequently include examples of what it is not. Specifically, researchers often elucidate aspects of leadership by making a distinction between leaders and managers. For example, Bennis and Nanus (1985) assert that, “Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing” (p. 21). Burns (1978) defines a manager as someone who negotiates reasonable exchanges with others to induce them to act, while leaders serve to transform organizations. According to Davidson (1987), “Leaders are those who give the organization the vision and direction needed by managers for operating within the organization” (p. 276). Katz and Kahn (1978) place the emphasis in organizational management on the fostering of efficiency and the maintenance of effective operation and associate leadership with facilitating vision and direction in an organization. In effect, the dichotomy established between leadership and management in research literature suggests that managers act to accomplish the more technical, predictable components of organizational tasks in accordance with policy, procedure, rules, and regulations. Leadership, however, is more aligned with establishing and maintaining organizational vision, participating in goal setting and decision-making rather than the supervision of functional details. Management is thus conceptualized as maintaining order, organizing, and controlling (Kotter, 1988; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Northouse, 2004).

Bolman and Deal (2008) make a distinction between leadership and management similar to the conceptualization of the researches noted above but concede that, “the two are easily confused” (2008, p. 337). The tendency to interchange the terms is a function of the fact that in many organizations including public schools, administrators require both leadership and management skills. Gilson (1994) suggests a balance between management and leadership: "Leadership provides a focus for management while management provides a reality check for leadership" (p. 25). Other theorists suggest a more symbiotic relationship between leadership and management (Bass, 1985; Gardner, 1990; Gilson, 1994; Kotter, 1988; McDade, 1987). McDade (1987) and Kotter (1988) note that executives and administrators must be adept as both managers and leaders. In effect, regardless of the title, components of management and leadership are necessary within a single position. Mintzberg (2004) further notes: “Managers have to lead and leaders have to manage. Management without leadership is sterile; leadership without management is disconnected and encourages hubris” (p. 6). For Gardner (1990), while leadership and management are “not the same thing . . . most managers exhibit some leadership skills, and most leaders on occasion find themselves managing,” thus the two concepts “overlap” (p. 14).

Whether management and leadership are separate concepts or overlapping components of a singular ideal, principals are expected to execute the demands implicit in both. Researchers have engaged in significant efforts to study the role of principal as both manager and leader of their organizations using existing theories of leadership. Leadership theories have evolved throughout the 20th century with each

subsequent theory building on the previous by addressing perceived shortcomings. A review of these theories helps situate the role of principal and creates a context for understanding the current expectations for the position and the impetus for the development of new leadership roles such as the school business manager.

Trait Theory of Leadership

The trait approach for studying leadership is based on the assumption that identifying the distinguishing characteristics of successful leaders will provide a lens for understanding the concept of leadership (Bensimon Neumann, & Birnbaum 1989; Doyle & Smith, 2001; Northouse, 2004). Focusing on the qualities of the leader/manager, trait theory originally suggested that leaders possess inherent qualities that make them effective. Theorists operating from this paradigm attempt to isolate specific traits associated with leadership related to physical and personality characteristics, intellectual capacity, and social background (Bensimon et al., 1989; Gardner, 1990; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Yukl, 2006). Their work has generated a long list of characteristics often associated with successful leaders including vision, passion, honesty, integrity, curiosity, and trust, among many others (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, Collins, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Peters & Austin, 1985 as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2008).

The trait theory was popular from the early 1900s to the 1950s and inspired the “heroic” or “great man” leadership image. Bass (1990) notes that during this period of leadership research, leaders were viewed as superior individuals who “possessed qualities and abilities that differentiated them from people in general” (p. 378).

Criticism of the limitations and inconsistencies of trait theory has made it less favorable among cotemporary researchers (Bass, 1990; Northhouse, 2004; Stodgill, 1974). The most obvious flaw "is the failure of the approach to delimit a definitive list of leadership traits" (Northhouse, 2004, p. 23). Even if a list of absolute traits were available, it is unlikely that any one individual would possess all of them. Thus the trait approach is most useful in the evaluation of the individual leader rather than as a theory that can be generalized broadly to leadership. Additionally, the trait approach has been discredited by more recent research that posits that leadership is situational. Thus traits associated with success in one situation do not necessarily predict effective leadership in another (Bass, 1990; Northhouse, 2004; Yukl, 2006). Despite the criticism of employing a trait theory approach to studying leadership, elements of trait theory continue to inform contemporary work such as that by Kouzes and Posner (2002). Many educators continue to subscribe to the traits theory of leadership in schools, believing leadership rests on only one person, the principal (Elmore, 2000). Contemporary studies of school leadership also perpetuate the traits theory by frequently seeking to identify those characteristics of school principals that suggest successful leadership

Behavioral Theory of Leadership

Rather than focusing on characteristics associated with the trait approach, the behavioral approach attempts to identify patterns of action undertaken by leaders and managers, in effect, to categorize activities that represent leadership (Bass, 1990; Bensimon et al., 1989; Yukl, 2006). Often studies within this tradition attempt to identify differences in behavior between effective and ineffective leaders and to use

self-reporting instruments, observation, critical incident analysis, and questionnaires to examine the effects of leader behavior on group performance (Bensimon et al., 1989). Theorists suggested that individuals may not necessarily be born with successful leadership traits, but rather could learn certain behaviors that could make them successful leaders. The behavioral approach marked an effort to focus on what leaders do rather than defining their qualities and was prevalent during the 1950s and 1960s.

The Ohio State University and University of Michigan studies conducted in the 1940s and Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid framework are seminal works in the behavioral approach (Bass, 1990; Bensimon, et al., 1989; Yukl, 2006). All sought to correlate management/leadership effectiveness in the context of task-orientated or relationship-orientated behaviors that leaders assume. The Ohio State studies identified structure and consideration as key elements of successful leadership. Initiating structure, according to the study, delineates the relationship between the leader and subordinates within the organization as well as defines organizational procedures and channels of communication (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Consideration focuses on leader behaviors that engender trust and respect (Hoy & Miskel, 2008.). The Michigan studies furthered the conceptualization of initiating structure and consideration. This work substantiated that leaders/managers prioritize initiating while followers identify consideration as an important component of leader effectiveness (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid expanded the behavioral approach. It identified five leadership styles that represented different combinations of concern for

people and concern for task. Managers who simultaneously scored high in both areas were determined to be “ideal managers” who successfully integrate people and tasks and yield high levels of production in the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Criticism of the behavioral approach to leadership has emanated from its assertion that there is a “best” way to be a leader or manager. Like critics of the trait approach, the behavioral approach has been faulted for not acknowledging the importance of the situational context in which leadership is executed. As Hersey and Blanchard (1993) noted, “research clearly indicated that no single leadership style was universally effective, for the relationship among supervisory behavior, organizational performance, and employee satisfaction changes from situation to situation” (p.6). Criticism of the behavioral approach specifically notes that it is easy to label certain behaviors as effective once the desired outcomes are achieved. The difficulty, however, is in selecting in advance the behaviors that will produce those outcomes.

Situational/Contingency Theory of Leadership

The situational or contingency approach emerged in the 1960s. This approach seeks to understand how leadership/management behavior is impacted by circumstances both within and external to the organizational environment. This leadership theory suggests that a successful leader/manager is not only defined by specific traits or behaviors, but also by how he/she adapts to a given situation (Northouse, 2004). It stresses the importance of situational factors that require leaders to adapt their leadership style. The contingency approach posits that there are multiple ways to lead with the “best” manner for doing so reliant on the environmental factors faced by the leader. Given this focus, this theory purports that

the most effective way of improving leadership is not to change a person's style of leadership but to place leaders into positions suitable to their leadership orientation or to have them alter their situations to be consistent with their individual strengths (Bensimon et al., 1989).

According to Hoy and Miskel (2008), Fiedler (1967) devised the first major theory of contingency leadership, the Least Preferred Coworker Theory (LPC) that also remains as one of the most influential. This theory considers three aspects: leadership style, situational control, and effectiveness. Leadership style in Fielder's theory determines the degree to which an individual is task-motivated or relationship-motivated based on the LPC rating. In regard to situational control, the study considered three factors: position power, task structure and leader-member relationship. The effectiveness component of this study focused solely on the degree to which tasks are accomplished in the organization.

The Hersey and Blanchard's (1993) situational leadership model is also representative of this approach to leadership study. Focusing on two dimensions of leadership, task behavior, how the leader delineates duties and responsibilities of subordinates; and relationship behavior, the extent of two-way or multi level communication by a leader; the theorists developed a matrix for assessing leadership. The model also focuses on subordinate readiness or maturity to distinguish the appropriate leadership style for a particular situation. Subsequent researchers contend that this approach is limited as it focuses "mostly on the relationship between managers and immediate subordinates and say little about issues of structure, politics, or symbols" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 349-350). Like theories before it, the primary

focus is on the individual in charge.

Transactional/Transformational Theory of Leadership

Transactional leadership, prevalent in the 1960s, is based on bureaucratic authority and focuses on task completion. The leader-follower relationship in transactional leadership is based on an “exchange of valued things” that may be political, economic, or psychological in nature (Burns, 1978, p. 19). In effect, the relationship is a bargaining process with leaders motivating followers to engage in the transaction by appealing to their self-interests. The exchange process involved is often associated with rewards and punishments and is intended to increase compliance with the organizational goals. Burns suggest that transaction is a lower level leadership orientation because it is located in contractual relationships contingent upon self-interest and the use of rewards to motivate. Transactional leadership is associated with behavioralism and is characterized by control, direction, and rewards. Principal behaviors associated with supervision of teachers and programs are often steeped in this theory.

In contrast to the transactional approach Burns (1978) articulated transformational leadership, which occurs “when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 20). Transformational leaders motivate followers by raising their consciousness about the importance of organizational goals and by inspiring them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). While maintaining an awareness of organizational goals, the transforming

leader also focuses on the needs and motives of followers. Burns explains that transforming leadership “ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, ... transforming ... both” (p. 20). Thus it is ultimately a “process of building commitment to the organizations objectives and empowering followers to accomplish these objectives,” (Yukl, 2006, p. 324). Transformational leadership is associated with facilitating and empowerment as the primary leadership functions. The ideal of the transformational leader maintains many of the expectations of school principals: articulate a clear, compelling vision, explain how to attain the vision, act confidently and optimistically, demonstrate confidence in followers, emphasize values with symbolic actions, lead by example, and empower followers to achieve the vision (Yukl, 2006).

Principal Leadership

While the progression in theories has expanded conceptual understanding of leadership none were developed for the explicit purpose of studying how leadership is enacted in schools. Researchers have studied various models of leadership as practiced specifically in education with a frequent focus on the relationship between principal leadership and school effectiveness (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005). While such studies are nuanced, consistent among them is the conclusion that there is no single theory of leadership effectiveness that is valid in all contexts. Instead, principal leadership is best understood as embedded in aspects of each theory. Increasingly, there is an emphasis on understanding leadership not as a study of the individual, but rather as an interdependent relationship between principals and others in the school organization.

Contemporary educational theorists suggest school leaders adopt a more democratic view of authority and decision-making in schools. This initiative, however, challenges the deeply ingrained bureaucratic norms of school leadership. Adopting more egalitarian leadership practices is further challenged by the organizational structure of schools that maintain the traditional or classical theory approach founded in the factory models of the eighteenth century. The traditional, rational models schools have emulated suggest that organizations are formal structures designed to achieve specific, pre-determined objectives (Fayol, 1949; Parsons, 1951; Taylor, 1947; Weber, 1947). Rationality, not individual preferences of members are central to productive functioning. Traditional theory is focused on efficiency and production through the designation of specific roles and the division of labor. Formal authority vested in positional roles is considered instrumental to organizational success and clearly delineated rules and procedures govern the work within such organizations (Fayol, 1949; Parsons, 1951; Taylor, 1947; Weber, 1947). Problems within the organization are addressed by analysis focused on the structure of the organization.

Throughout the history of education, principals have largely assumed a managerial role within the bureaucratic organizational structure of schools. The position of principal emerged in the 1800s as schools began to grow and needed greater oversight in terms of management, including tasks such as facilities maintenance and supervision of teachers. While such tasks were often done in conjunction with teaching responsibilities, classroom instruction faded from the position as schools became more complex. As society in general became more

bureaucratized, so did the position of principal. The period from the 1920s to the 1960s saw “the profession’s emulation of corporate management” and the entrenchment of the principal role as “administrative manager” (Hallinger, 1992, p. 35). While the social changes of the 1960s and 1970s inaugurated the notion of principals emerging as “change agents,” a “pattern of managerial behavior” focused on “compliance” in implementing federal programs was a primary task of the principalship (Hallinger, 1992, p.35). The publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 highlighted the need for school improvement and effective leadership. This decade has been labeled “The Age of Reform” in education, (Hessel & Holloway, 2002) and inaugurated a shift in the ideal of the principal role from a manager to instructional leader. Despite the fact that the “instructional leadership image became firmly entrenched in professional rhetoric, changes in administrative practices were less evident” (Hallinger, 1992). While a focus on curriculum, instruction and assessment marked definitions of instructional leadership, the enormity of managerial aspects of the position frequently impede such a reality for principals.

The focus on instructional leadership has spawned recommendations for the decentralization of authority, restructuring schools to “focus on collective problem solving and capacity building” (Hallinger, 1992, p. 41). Principals, as the recognized leader of the organization thus became tasked with not only managing people but determining how best to empower members of the school community. The principal’s top priority in an era of instructional leadership becomes organizing the competences and talents of individuals so they complement each other and the vision and goals of the organization (Elmore, 2000).

Principal leadership has increasingly become more about leading change for the continuous improvement of teaching and learning (Elmore, 2000). The definition of what it is to be an educational leader has expanded to include new emphasis on instructional leadership in addition to the traditional tasks of building management. The increasing demands being placed on principals and the complexity of the issues with which they must contend demands a new look at all of what it means to be a school leader (Elmore, 2000).

A growing number of educational theorists advocate that leading today's schools requires more than the skills of any one individual (Gronn, 2002; Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Harris, 2005; Spillane et. al, 2001). These authors promote the empowerment of leaders in addition to the principal and suggest that failing to tap the leadership potential of all individuals in the organization amounts to squandering potential human resources (Barth, 2002). They contend that successful educational leadership will require "the development of collaborative decision-making strategies, distributed leadership practices, a culture of collegiality and community ... and processes for organizational change and renewal" (Davis et al., 2005).

Calls for shared or more collaborative leadership paradigms within schools has emerged as a mantra for meeting the growing demands on school principals. In such models the difference between shared leadership and traditional leadership models is:

The influence process involves more than just downward influence on subordinates by an appointed or elected leader. Rather, leadership is broadly distributed among a set of individuals instead of centralized in the hands of a single individual who acts in the role of a superior.

(Pearce & Conger, 2003, p. 1)

One of the benefits advocates for shared leadership suggest is that such a model honors greater access to a range of knowledge to inform decision-making.

Considering the demands and range of concerns inherent in contemporary K-12 education, the likelihood of one individual, namely the principal possessing all the knowledge necessary for effectively solving complex issues is unrealistic. Within shared models, each member of the organization has the potential to contribute a perspective, knowledge, or capabilities to inform the work of the whole. These unique backgrounds and characteristics provide a platform for leadership to become diffused throughout the organization (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

This study does not seek to explore shared or distributive leadership as the primary focus of inquiry but rather adopts it as a construct for situating the position of school business manager within leadership dynamics in schools. Distributive leadership, like many other terms associated with leadership, is mired in conceptual complexity. Frequently it is associated with collaborative or shared leadership. At its simplest, distributive leadership is the sharing of leadership between two or more individuals. This study does not seek to extricate the nuances of each of these designations but instead adopts the broad perspective of distributive leadership, which encompasses the overlapping definitions.

The notion of distributive leadership is not a new phenomenon. The term first appeared in a chapter on leadership written by Gibb in 1954 (Gronn, 2008). The development of the term has remained relatively consistent to its original intent, focusing on the allocation of leadership functions among different individuals or

groups in an organization rather than relying on one sole leader to be responsible for all functions of the organization. Katz and Kahn (1978) note that, “organizations are more likely to be effective when leadership tasks are distributed” (p. 571) and expand this view by advocating for shared decision making and delegation akin to that recommended by Schein (1992).

Gronn (2001) maintains that distributive leadership is a “view of leadership as less the property of individuals and as the contextualized outcome of interactive, rather unidirectional” activity (p. 444). According to Gronn, communication and trust are essential to establishing a distributive leadership structure. Elmore (2002, 2008) suggests that distributed leadership involves coordinating “diverse competencies” of multiple individuals “into a coherent whole” so that the “skills of one person can be made to complement that of another,” (2002, p. 15). In effect, Elmore advocates for distributing leadership tasks to those who have the expertise closest to the problem regardless of their formal role. Spillane (2006) focuses on interactions among individuals as the essential aspect of distributed leadership noting that leadership is a system of complex interactions between individuals in an organization and the situations with which they must contend. His model is contingent upon interactions between leaders and followers to understand how leadership is enacted. The central, compelling assumption is that leadership should be stretched over an organization and involve all stakeholders, rather than resting in the hands of a few individuals as the top of the organizational hierarchy (Spillane et al., 2001).

At the crux of leadership labeled as shared, collaborative, or distributed is the notion that many within an organization have the potential to influence its functioning

and ultimate improvement. This new model of leadership is not based on position, authority or formal hierarchy. It is based instead on various levels and types of expertise and influence.

Educational leadership has embraced the concept of sharing or distributing leadership in schools as both a theoretical framework for understanding leadership and a prescription for practice. However, study of the phenomenon has been focused on the ideal of the concept and less on the actual implications of distributing authority and power inherent in the practice. As such, discussions by theorists have been relatively silent as regards conflicts or tensions that emerge when shifts in power and authority occur. This is a significant omission, especially since, "Recognizing and trying to change power relationships, especially in complicated, traditional institutions, is among the most complex tasks human beings can undertake" (Sarason, 1991, p. 7). Schools are structured hierarchically, with formal authority vested in established roles and with the principal serving as the apex of decision-making power (Fullan, 1991). While sharing or distributing leadership is the current leadership model, actualizing its ideals is more complicated. Altering the taken for granted norms of school leadership is a challenge because as Cuban notes, "administrative and managerial activities are embedded in the DNA of the principalship (in Hallinger, 1992, p. 41). Thus implementing the change may result in "symbolic efforts without effecting significant changes in the overall pattern of practice" (Hallinger, 1992, p. 41). The incongruity between the structural norms of schools and the ideals of sharing leadership invariably lead to conflicts best understood by applying a micropolitical perspective to the change process.

Micropolitics

The micropolitics of schools is embedded within the constructs of political theory. Politics has been defined as “who gets what, when, and how” (Laswell, 1936), “the authoritative allocation of values” (Easton, 1965), “the systematic study of relations of power and influence among human beings” (Dahl, 1961), decisions related to the allocation of values for a given society or social organization (Blasé & Blasé, 2002), and as the “process of making decisions and allocating resources in the context of scarcity and divergent interests” (Bolman & Deal, 2008). While specific definitions vary to some extent, an underlying principle emerges. Political theory seeks to analyze the relationship between conflict and power that evolve in arenas marked by divergent values and scarce resources. Conflict arises when an individual or group seeks to advance specific interests. Power relationships thus emerge as a response to manage potential or real conflict, to create group cohesion in order to enforce the dominant view, and to control behavior through formal and informal means (Marshall & Scribner, 1991). In effect, the political process occurs in situations of scarce resources and differing ideologies or preferences (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Actors within these arenas, individually or collectively in the form of coalitions, bargain and negotiate to further their interests. The definition of micropolitics provided by Blase in Blase and Anderson (1995) provides a good overview of the concept. He states:

Micropolitics refers to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. In large part, political actions result from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to

influence and/or protect....Both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics, (p. 3)

Applying the simplistic prescription that “the referent for macro,” is the “external,” the “referent for micro is internal” (Johnson, 2003, p. 54), a working definition of the term *micropolitics* emphasizes the strategic use of power within organizations for the purpose of influence and protection. According to Blasé (1991), micropolitics refers to the “use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organization” (p. 2). For Hoyle (1982), "Micropolitics embraces those strategies by which individuals and groups in organizational contexts seek to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests" (p. 88). The strategic use of power by individuals and groups within an organization and the conflict it seeks to thwart or exacerbate serve as key concepts in micropolitical theory (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Ball, 1987; Blasé, 1989; Hoyle, 1986; Pfeffer, 1981). Synthesizing the multiple definitions proffered by scholars, micropolitics involves the complexities associated with the attaining and maintaining power, authority, influence, negotiation, and protection within the context of the school (Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991; Hoyle, 1986; Malen, 1995; Marshall & Scribner, 1991).

Political theorists maintain that all organizations are politically orientated (Mintzberg, 1983, Morgan 2006; Pfeffer, 1981). Schools are not immune from the micropolitical maneuvering implicit in all organizations. Schools are inevitably beset by conflicts and power as they are inundated with “complex, competing demands, chronic resource shortages, unclear technologies, uncertain supports and value-laden

issues” which lead to “difficult, divisive allocative choices” (Malen, 1995, p. 148).

The challenges schools encounter, including those that threaten the normative expectations of power and authority, provide compelling reason to study the politics of education, particularly micropolitics because it is the level at which the realities of teaching and learning, the products of education, are enacted. Although “not always explicitly evident,” micropolitics “pervade the organizational lives of those involved in schools” (Mawhinney, 1999, p. 160). Yet, it is frequently conceived as “the dark side of organizational life” (Hoyle, 1982, p. 87), and thus commonly silenced at the practitioner level. Educators have a tendency to be unable or unwilling to articulate micropolitical conflicts (Marshall & Scribner, 1991). Instead, the proclivity of school administrators is to marginalize dissent and conflict in schools (Achinstein, 2002).

Ironically, however, as Lindle (1999) notes:

The study of micropolitics is absolutely a question of survival for school leaders and other educators. Indeed, most practicing school leaders are already astute, or even unwitting, students of micropolitics. Not only is the study of micropolitics inevitable, for most school leaders it is an inherent occupational requirement. (p. 176)

Iannaccone (1975) first applied the phrase micropolitics of education in the mid 1970s as “the interaction and political ideologies of social systems of teachers, administrators, and pupils within school buildings” (p. 43). At that time, Iannaccone observed that these “interrelationships are the least systematically studied . . . and may be an area in which the most important next contributions to the field of knowledge will come” (1975, p. 43). Since then, scholars have acknowledged the

value inherent in the study of the micropolitics of education including the issues regarding the power relationships between administrators and teachers (Achinstein, 2002; Anderson, 1998; Ball, 1987; Blase, 1991; Blasé & Anderson, 1995; Hargreaves, 1991) and site-based management (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998; Malen, Ogwa, & Kranz, 1989; Smylie, Lazurus, & Brownlee-Conyers, 1996), among a broad range of interests. Several common constructs emerge in the literature related to micropolitics in schools. This includes: conflict, power, authority, and influence; compromise, negotiating, and bargaining.

Conflict

The concept of conflict is inherent in the study of micropolitics and is a reality in contemporary public education. As Ball (1987) describes:

I take schools, in common with virtually all other social organizations, to be arenas of struggle; to be riven with actual or potential conflict between members; to be poorly coordinated; to be ideologically diverse. . . If we are to understand the nature of schools as organizations, we must achieve some understanding of these conflicts.

(p. 19)

While the structures and rules that govern the workings of school are intended to keep conflict implicit and submerged,

Rational aspects of organizations emphasized in traditional models may actually precipitate conflict and political behavior . . . Similarly, hierarchical task-specialization may create differences among units in

an organization on a number of salient dimensions, such as levels of power, goals, tasks, language, and training. (Blasé, 1991, p. 9)

Task specialization in schools in the form of curriculum expertise and departments, as well as the hierarchical structures of authority for their governance, create opportunities for divergent interests that result in conflict.

Conflict, the disagreement or tensions between micropolitical actors, can fall along a continuum of intensity. Change precipitates conditions that produce increased micropolitical maneuvering including conflict in both formal and informal arenas of organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2008). As Malen (1995) notes, “change breeds ambiguity and ambiguity provides shifts in the power structure.” The uncertainty that often accompanies change and the resistance inspired by it frequently lead to conflict in schools being perceived as “aberrant and pathological, something to be managed or remediated” (Reed, 2000, p. 7). However locating conflict as a constructive concept for fostering innovative thinking and progress in organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Sims, 2002) is equally applicable to the study of micropolitics. “Conflict . . . is not just an inevitability to organizational life but may be seen as a process through which organizations grow and develop (Boyd-Barrett, 1976) as “some types of conflict encourage new solutions to problems and enhance creativity” (Sims, 2002).

While micropolitical theory focuses on conflict dynamics within organizations precipitated by divergent interests, multiple ideologies, and scarce resources (Ball, 1987; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hoyle, 1986), it is important to note that cooperation is an aspect for consideration within the tradition as well (Blasé, 1989; Blasé &

Anderson, 1995; Burns, 1978; Cyert & March, 1963; Greenfield, 1991; Mangham, 1979; Morgan, 2006). Efforts to work collaboratively to find solutions and to bridge divergent ideologies are significant to micropolitical inquiry. Neglecting this aspect of negotiation relegates the field to merely focusing on the seemingly pejorative aspects of conflict. To do so would limit a true reflection of the dynamics that are inherent in organizations. Both of these aspects of micropolitical activity in schools, conflict and cooperation/collaboration are significant in the current study.

Power

Conflict that emerges is often the result of issues of power. Power is a key component of micropolitical activity and perhaps the aspect that makes it so difficult for school leaders to address. According to Kanter (1979), “Power is America’s last dirty word” (p. 67). A simplistic rationale for such a perspective is embedded in study of power relations associated with Machiavelli’s *The Prince* in which he sought to extricate discussions of power from issues of morality. According to Machiavelli, the only real concern of the political ruler is the acquisition and preservation of power (power as associated with “maintaining the state”). In his treatise, means justify ends. The direct approach of his discussion has been interpreted as a pejorative commentary on power, a perspective that continues to mire candid assessment of individual and coalition use of it in organizational contexts.

The study of power is problematic (Kipnis, 1976; Pfeffer 1981; Shafritz, Ott, & Jang, 2005). Kipnis (1976) suggests that one of the reasons why is that individuals who have power are reluctant to discuss their power. Pfeffer (1981) notes that the not

only is the assessment of power “controversial and problematic,” but the very definition of power is as well. Political theory has yet to produce a universally accepted definition of power across the relevant disciplines of organizational behavior, political science, sociology, and educational policy (Geary, 1992; Luthans, 1995). As Geary (1992) notes, in the “struggle to operationalize power,” theorists often, “resort to another layer of terms” that lack consistency (p. 14). In effect, the difficulty in discussing power from a theoretical perspective is the ambiguity associated with the terms applied to its discussion. Dahl (1957), for example, uses the terms power and influence interchangeably while Bierstedt distinguishes between power as coercive and influence as persuasive (Bierstedt in Bacharach & Lawler, 1980). Lasswell (1936) designates power as focused influence whereas Luthans (1995) proffers that influence has a more broad application than power. Authority, power actualized by virtue of an official role or position, while less contested definitionally, also presents another “layer” in constructing an understanding of power.

The semantics associated with compartmentalizing the distinction among power, authority, and influence has the potential to hijack the actual value of investigating the role of power in the study of micropolitics in schools. A lack of clarity in the concepts may foster misunderstanding or misallocation of actual power dynamics in an organization. In addition, it lends itself to perpetuating the negative context of power dynamics thus potentially discouraging educational leaders from embracing it as a natural component of the workings of schools. In the context of this study, power is conceptualized as the ability of an individual or group to achieve goals using

resources and strategies from a position of authority and influence. Thus, power itself is a broad concept, a potential or inferred force rather than a tangible, measurable phenomenon (Bass, 1990; Kotter, 1985; Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981). The study of power thus involves inference or attribution rather than direct observation. In this study, authority and influence provide the contexts for the observable application of power in the study of micropolitics of school organizations.

Authority and Influence

Weber defines authority as “the probability that certain commands (or all commands) from a given source will be obeyed by a given group of persons” (cited in Blau & Scott, 2003, p. 28). The two criteria Weber establishes in relation to authority are that subordinates offer voluntary compliance and suspend judgment in advance of the command. Willingness to do so is associated with authority as formal power that is legitimized through an official role or position (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Gamson, 1968; Weber, 1947). Authority is the legitimate or legally sanctioned aspect of power in the decision-making process supported by the ability to enact coercive sanctions. It is grounded in traditional models of organizations that prioritize the hierarchical structures and the roles of individuals within them. Thus power in the form of authority is vested in position in an organization.

Structuralists often equate power with authority. In the increasingly complex nature of organizations, however, there is often a disparity between the power inherent in a position, authority, and the power necessary for actualizing the work required (Blasé & Anderson, 1995; Kotter, 1988). This has led researchers such as Blasé and Anderson (1995) to contend that power is not necessarily only hierarchical

or related to position in school organizations but is embedded within the relations among individuals within that organization. They describe interactions among all stakeholders in schools as complex relationships that form a “web” of political activity that is interrelated and mutually dependent. Focusing exclusively on a structural perspective of power as authority neglects important aspects of power as they are actualized in micropolitical activity in schools. In addition to authority, theorists argue that strategies for the purpose of influencing and protecting are essential to the study of micropolitics (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Ball, 1987; Blasé, 1998; Hoyle, 1986; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Pettigrew, 1973).

As the second aspect of power in micropolitical theory, influence is the capacity to affect the action of others, to shape decisions or actions by informal or non-authoritative means (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Hoyle, 1986). Yukl (2006) defines influence as “the effect of one party (the agent) on another (the target) and the process by which the agent affects the target” (p. 13). Influence differs from authority in that it emanates from multiple sources rather than being confined to a single position, is contingent upon relationships among individuals and groups, and is fluid rather than fixed.

Understanding the distinction between authority and influence is further enhanced by recognizing how theorists classify the concepts in their discussions of micropolitical activity in organizations. Blasé and Anderson contextualizes power relationships in three categories, suggesting that it can be employed in an authoritative manner as “power over,” in a facilitative approach as “power through,” or in what they advocate as “power together,” an effort that empowers stakeholders to

“expect democratic participation” (p.14). In power over relationships, leaders “achieve goals through their control of resources, persuasiveness, and hierarchical position over followers” (p. xiv). Leaders in power through relationships “achieve goals through the motivation and mobilization of followers” while leaders operating in power with relationships achieve goals “through the collaboration of leaders and followers” shifting leadership and follower positions “depending on the issue” (p. xiv). In Blasé and Anderson’s model, the latter two represent influence whereas the former is the authority aspect of organizational relations.

Etzioni (cited in Hersey & Blanchard, 1993) identifies two types of power: position and personal power. Position power is the ability “To induce compliance from others because of their position in the organization” (p. 43). Position power is thus akin to authority or what Blasé and Anderson (1995) identify as “power over.” It is legitimized by the organizational hierarchy and rules embedded in the structural frame of organizations. Personal power, in contrast, is associated with having influence over willing followers. Personal power is defined as “the extent to which people are willing to follow a leader” (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993, p. 223). Personal power is thus more akin to influence as it is contingent on the relational aspect of interactions between actors in an organizational context. Mechanic (1962) and Blau and Scott (2003) identify similar constructs of power referring to them as formal and informal powers, formal associated with authority, informal more aligned with influence.

Authority is relatively simple to assess. Organizational hierarchies invariably delineate the positions invested with this aspect of power. Whoever occupies the

position of authority can be said to possess power by virtue of that role in the organization. Influence, however, is not as readily measureable. Influence strategies thus become the unit of measure for assessing influence one has in an organization. Blasé (1989) defines influence strategies as the specific behaviors, overt or covert, employed to influence others for the purpose of achieving a goal. Theorists vary in their use of the terms strategies and tactics when discussing influence, at times using the terms interchangeably (Blasé, 1989; Kipnis, 1980; Pettigrew, 1973; Pfeffer, 1981; Yukl, 2006). For the purposes of this study, the concept of strategies will be employed using Blasé's definition as specific behaviors initiated by an actor for the purpose of influence.

Summary

The ideal of a more collaborative approach to school leadership is a staple of contemporary educational theory. Given the increasing demands that school principals face each day, maintaining the notion of the single heroic leader is an archaic approach to school improvement. However, balancing the long-standing expectation that principals serve as the apex of the school site with a more shared approach to decision-making is a challenge that has not been fully explored in the literature. Collaboration, in practice, challenges the structures of formal authority embedded in how school works and altering the normative expectations of school leadership can result in tensions that undermine the potential of such reform. The implementation of the school business manager position is a valuable construct in which to study the dynamics that emerge when such an approach is adopted. The

position as proposed by the Maryland State Department of Education implies the reallocation of traditional authority in the redistribution of tasks and invokes influence in the inclusion of the school business manager as a member of the school leadership team.

This chapter provided a literature context in which to explore the implementation of the school business manager position. A micropolitical framework lends itself to investigating and understanding the process by which principals and school business managers navigate those tensions and come to actualize a shared structure for leadership and management in schools.

Chapter 3: Research Design

Overview

The school business manager position represents a new model for leadership in the school setting. This study was designed to explore the implementation of the role in one school district to better understand not only the position but also the potential tensions and negotiations required for its implementation. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How was the school business manager role conceptualized at the district level and how is it operationalized at the school site? Specifically, to what extent do principals and school business managers perceive that authority is reallocated?
2. What tensions emerge in the initial stages as principal and school business manager define their roles and relationship in their organizational setting?
3. How do principals and school business managers negotiate these tensions to operationalize their roles?

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology used to conduct the study.

Research Tradition and Qualitative Design

Qualitative research designs, including case study methodology, are often criticized as being too dependent on the subjectivity of the investigator and for having findings that lack sufficient precision and academic rigor (Yin, 2003). However, researchers note the benefit of utilizing qualitative methods when exploring

educational problems and phenomena (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Creswell (2007) defines qualitative research as:

an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest that, “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). In effect, qualitative research is valuable in its ability to capture human experience within an authentic context because it develops a holistic understanding of phenomena and respects the interconnectedness of factors that influence its construction. Descriptive studies associated with qualitative research seek to understand the actions, beliefs, attitudes, social structures, and processes that animate the phenomenon in question (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

I identified qualitative research as the appropriate approach because of the exploratory nature of my study. Qualitative research is valuable when the research problem has unknown variables or needs to be explored (Creswell, 2007). Since there was limited research that addressed the tensions that emerge when there are systemic changes to leadership structure in schools, it was important to have the flexibility to look at patterns that emerged in the data. The tenants of qualitative research allowed me to explore the lived experiences of the participants involved to gain preliminary insights into the phenomenon.

Case study research, in particular, provides “thick description” of one or more illustrative cases to construct an understanding of an issue (Creswell, 2007). It is the “study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Case study allows the researcher to identify “significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” while also identifying “various nuances, patterns, and more latent elements” (Berg, 2009, p. 318). My study emerged as a multiple case study of the implementation of the school business manager position and its impact on the leadership dynamics of the school setting. A case study approach facilitated my exploration of a bounded system “over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). While I initiated the study within one district, I studied the phenomenon as individual cases bounded by the individual participant within the context of his/her experience within designated schools and principals. Yin, (2003) suggests that case study is particularly suited to studies when “the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18).

Sampling

The context of this study was a school district located in Maryland. Lewis County Public School is in its 10th year employing the school business manager model having initiated the program at the start of the 2002-2003 school year. Although not the first district in the state to employ the position, Lewis County does have the distinction of being the first school district to implement the school business manager position in all schools, K-12. This full implementation offered an

opportunity to study the position as it is actualized at multiple grade levels across multiple sites.

Berg (2009) and Maxwell (2005) suggest that selecting a site should be informed by the ability of the researcher to gain entry or access to participants. As an employee in the county, I was readily able to identify the “gatekeepers” to obtain access to conduct the study. More importantly, however, my familiarity with the county and the school business manager initiative allowed me to be purposeful in my sampling. Patton states, “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in the selecting information rich cases for study in depth” (2002, p. 230). In purposive sampling, individuals are selected based on specific questions/purposes of research and on the basis of information available about those individuals (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In this study, I selected three school business managers based on their longevity in the position in Lewis County Public Schools. I specifically sought these individuals because all three had extensive and diverse experiences as business managers. Ken Stevens is the only school business manager hired in the initial implementation. Both Grace Strong and Joan Rodgers were hired as mid-year replacements during the first year of implementation.

I was also deliberate in selecting Mr. Stevens, Ms. Strong, and Ms. Rodgers because each of them has worked with multiple principals during their tenure as school business managers. I constructed the study to include principal perspectives since research suggests that leadership is actualized in relational contexts. Using my knowledge of each of the school business manager’s experience, I realized that they had worked with various combinations of the same principals. The Table below

outlines the relational context between school business managers, the principals with whom they worked, and the school setting.

Table 1: Study Participants

	<i>Fred Hall</i> Principal	<i>Doug Smith</i> Principal	<i>Kim Grant</i> Principal
Ken Stevens SBM	Westbrook Middle High School	Essex High School	X
Grace Strong SBM	Westbrook Middle High School	Essex High School	Essex High School
Joan Rodgers SBM	X	Johnson Elementary School	Johnson Elementary School

The combination of working partnerships between school business managers and principals offered the opportunity to explore multiple perspectives of the same phenomenon.

The dynamics between school business manager and principal were studied within the specific contexts of three schools. While Lewis County is a small district, the schools differ significantly. A broad overview of the demographic information of the three schools identified for this study is included in the following table. This information is included to provide greater specificity as to the context in which the school business manger position was implemented.

Table 2: School Demographics

	Westbrook Middle High School	Essex High School	Johnson Elementary
Total Enrollment	387	1105	1100
Hispanic	5%	6%	20%
Black	14%	21%	23%
White	73%	68%	51%
Two or More Races	5%	2%	4%
Other	3%	3%	2%

Special Education	13%	17%	16%
FARMS	36%	32%	54%

The sampling strategy utilized for this study provided multiple opportunities for understanding how authority is realized and the tensions and strategies employed in its construction because patterns of responses could be contextualized across the multiple relationships and settings.

Data Collection

Qualitative research is characterized by the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, in an attempt to secure a deeper understanding of the phenomenon related to the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The data collection in this case study included the review of documents, observation of district school business manager meetings, and interviews with school business managers, principals, and district leaders.

Documents

Documents can be a valuable source of data for case study research. Reviewing documents provides pertinent information regarding the history and context of the phenomena of study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In addition, documents can afford insights into the “dynamics of everyday functioning” (Mertens, 2005, p. 398). As an unobtrusive method of data collection, review of documents can be a significant source of information in “portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 107).

The primary documents I analyzed in this study were archival records related to

the school business manager position. I was able to secure these records from both the district- and school-level personnel including job descriptions, role matrices, training materials, and meeting minutes. In addition, I was able to access school demographics from the district to better understand the school-level context in which school business managers work. An overview of the documents that informed this study is provided in Table 5.

Table 3: Document Summary

Document Title	Summary/Key Concepts
School Business Manager Job Description Approved: April 2002	Broadly outlines SBM responsibilities. States that SBM reports to the principal
Principal: Job Description Approved: April 2002	Broadly outlines principal responsibilities. States principal reports to the superintendent
School Manager Job Description Approved: August 2003	Minor revisions, the most substantive the removal of the word business from the title
Lewis County's School Managers Model Powerpoint Presented by: Dr. Kathy Hughes, Jim Mills, Margaret Starks(principal)	Presented at various state level meetings to outline the county's initiative. The powerpoint was actually developed by Ken Stevens.
School Manager Manual Lewis County Public Schools training guide	Includes job description, policies and procedures, support staff handbook, facilities master plan, forms, special education and student services documents. Collected by Jim Mills and used for training school business managers
School Manager Meeting Minutes April 1, 2003 through March 2012	There are over 300 pages of monthly meeting minutes. These include information regarding who was in attendance, main issues presented by the assistant superintendent or guest speaker, concerns raised by school business managers. School business managers rotated responsibility for taking minutes until 2012 when new

	assistant superintendent assumed responsibility for preparing the minutes.
Organizational Chart for Lewis County Public Schools 2010	Visual representation of district hierarchy
Westbrook Administrative Responsibilities 2005	Lists principal, assistant principal and school manager responsibilities. Developed by the school principal (Mr. Hall)
Essex High School Administrative Team 2009	Lists principal, assistant principal and school manager responsibilities. Developed by the school principal (Ms. Grant)
Essex High School Administrative Team 2011	Lists principal, assistant principal and school manager responsibilities. Developed by the school principal (Mr. Smith)

I collected documents prior to interviewing participants in the study, which assisted me in formulating interview questions. The only document not available until later in the study was the 2002 school business manager job description. I revisited documents to analyze them in relation to interview data I collected from participants. While documents frequently corroborated and augmented data collected from interviews, there were two incidents in which documents revealed that interview data from a participant was incorrect and reflected a significant misunderstanding on his part. In some instances, documents provided additional information not obtained through other sources.

I followed the same procedure for reviewing each document. After reading each document, I wrote a summary and identified emergent themes and patterns in that data point. I then analyzed the multiple documents collectively to make inferences about repeated themes and how these themes provided insight to the school business

manager role.

Observations

Observation provides an opportunity for the researcher to “discover complex interactions in natural social settings” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 99). I completed observations of county-level school business manager meetings. These meetings are held monthly at the district office and include all school business managers in the county as well as the assistant superintendent for administrative services, transportation director, facilities manager, food service manager, energy manager, and the district’s financial officer. My purpose in completing these observations was to further develop an understanding of the role of the school business manager position, specifically the authority vested in the position. These meetings provided an opportunity to substantiate what the district envisioned as the authority of the school business manager.

I took field notes at each meeting using the observation protocol (Appendix G). In addition, I reviewed the meeting agenda for each meeting and the minutes. I utilized Berg’s (2009) four steps for generating detailed field notes, which included recording short notes and brief statements from participants during the meeting itself and writing brief initial analytic notes regarding my thoughts on what I was observing. After the meetings, I added details regarding my perceptions of how individuals interacted and responded and finally, I reviewed my notes to add my reflections on the meeting. These notes were reviewed to look for themes and patterns.

Although observation of school business managers and principals was considered, this was not included because the study focused primarily on the initial tensions and

strategies for negotiating those tensions not the well-established relationship. Since school business managers and principals teams had also been reconfigured through transfers and retirements such observations were not possible.

Interviews

The third and primary method of qualitative data collection I used in this study was interviewing. Patton suggests that, “the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone’s mind” (2002, p. 196). Harre and Secord (cited in Greenfield, 1994) recommend semi-structured, open-ended questions to safeguard against the researcher’s predetermining the interviewee’s response. The interview protocols for this study were developed to be semi-structured, or what Berg (2009) labels a semi-standardized, approach. I asked each participant in the study the same set of questions to maximize uniformity and consistency throughout the interviews. However, to determine the particular nuances or to “probe” an interviewee’s reasoning, I included additional clarifying questions during the interview as permitted in this approach (Berg, 2009, p. 107).

The first set of interview protocols (see Appendix A-D) focused on the conceptualization of the school business manager position and its implementation at the school site. I modified the questions slightly for the distinct perspectives I sought including the superintendent and assistant superintendent who were responsible for the introduction of the role and for the designing of its focus. I interviewed school business managers and principals to garner their perspective on the role and how it is operationalized within the school. Although I planned for the first interview to be 45 minutes in length, the actual time with each participant varied. For example, the

assistant superintendent interview was almost 90 minutes long while the superintendent's was only 30 minutes in duration. Interviews with the three school business managers were generally longer than with the principals with the exception of Ms. Grant. I conducted a second interview with school business managers and principals (Appendix E and F). Questions were broad to address a range of issues that would allow responses to convey patterns of tensions and subsequent actions taken by the participants to navigate those tensions.

Prior to the start of the interviews, participants were provided with a brief explanation of the research I was conducting and a clarification of my role as a doctoral student affiliated with the University of Maryland. No interview proceeded without a signed consent form from the participant. I contacted interview participants in advance by letter of invitation and a follow-up email or phone call. I scheduled the interviews to accommodate participant needs, often meeting them in their schools or offices. All interviews were conducted in person to allow for the use of "full channels of communication" (Berg, 2009, p. 123), except for one interview with a former principal, Mr. Hall, who now lives out of state. This interview was conducted by phone. All participants gave me permission to record the interviews. I used both traditional tape recording and a Livescribe pen for recording. After the interviews, I transcribed the recording. I found this valuable since it required that I listen to participants' response repeatedly, which was helpful in immersing me in the data. Once I transcribed the interviews, I replaced names with pseudonyms to protect anonymity, including pseudonyms for participants, individuals they named in their responses, schools, and the district.

I then uploaded all interview transcripts into NVIVO 9 for analysis. In addition, I printed copies of each transcript and stored them in a locked file cabinet at my home. In addition to recording the interviews, I took field notes when meeting with participants to capture the most salient points and to make observations during the interview process. Patton (2002) identifies four purposes of note taking during the actual interview:

1. Help formulate new questions as the interview is being conducted
2. Assist in identifying early insights that may be relevant to subsequent interviews
3. Facilitate later analysis
4. Serve as a backup in the event the recorder malfunctioned or a tape is inadvertently erased. (p. 383)

Following each interview, I added additional notes regarding details about the setting, participant's demeanor as well as my initial reflections about the subject, the physical setting, and any interruptions to the interview. I used the same process regarding field notes as with the observation of the school business manager meetings. This was helpful to me because it allowed me to capture immediate observations and thoughts.

Data Analysis

Marshall and Rossman (2011) offer seven phases for data analysis that I used in completing this study. The first was organization of the data. Once I transcribed interviews and edited to change all identifying information, I uploaded the interview transcripts into NVIVO. I typed interview field notes and uploaded them into a folder

labeled interview notes. I also typed my notes from observations of school manager meetings and stored those in NVIVO in a file called observations. My summaries of documents were also included in NVIVO.

In stage two, I immersed myself in the data. I read interview transcripts multiple times and reviewed the accompanying field notes to add more context to the words I was reading. On several occasions, I listened to the audio again to hear participant voices. I sought to listen specifically for questions they may have responded to more quickly and those that caused more of a reflective pause. This process allowed me to familiarize myself with not only the content of the data but also the individuals I was interviewing. As I reviewed the data, I transitioned to stage three where I noted key ideas and themes that began to emerge, the reoccurring ideas expressed across participants such as the importance of communication between school business manager and principal and the concept of trust that reoccurred in participant responses. I noted these early reflections in my notes and returned to them frequently to reassess and refine categories.

I began stage four by coding my data in NVIVO based on the individual questions in the interviews I conducted. Since the majority of questions in the interviews were consistent across participants, I was able to use NVIVO to run framework matrices to compare participant responses to questions. These framework matrices allowed me to compare school business manager responses to those of the principals with whom they worked. Since the study included more than one principal who had worked with each school manager, I could compare principal descriptions of the same school manager and vice versa.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe analytic codes as tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study (p.56). For each question, I identified concepts from my literature review and initial conceptual framework. After reviewing responses, I added others that emerged and identified those that did not appear despite my initial thinking that they would. To initially categorize the data, I used “big bucket” a priori codes associated with authority, change, and conflict. Once I had the primary categories, I continued to code data into subcategories as themes emerged.

The process of writing memos allows the researcher to “develop tentative ideas about the categories and relationships” that emerge from the multiple sources of data (Maxwell, 2005, p. 94). Memos both “capture” and “facilitate” analytic thinking (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96). In stage five I began by writing memos, which allowed me to review each quote coded at that level to ensure that it represented the characteristics. I reviewed the quotes coded by each participant and summarized the information to compare how each school business manager and principal identified with that theme. I was able to identify patterns in the responses. Memoing was an iterative process, one that allowed me to analyze the data I had collected in a meaningful manner to address the research questions I sought to address. In an effort to insure that I was not excluding key understandings from the data or missing alternative meanings, a critical friend reviewed my data and challenged me to consider different interpretations. In addition, I frequently returned to field notes to seek clarity and at times revisited the audio recordings to seek more insight. Finally, I began composing my text.

Validity

I implemented several strategies in the study to address threats to validity. These included triangulation, “collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 112). Constructing the research as a multiple case study allowed for the perspectives of three school business managers and three principals. The sampling I used sought to include school business managers who had worked with multiple principals in different settings to gather diverse perspectives on the same phenomenon. The use of multiple methods for data collection including document review, observation, and interviews allowed me a means of confirming facts, identifying emergent themes, and, establishing findings essential in preserving validity in qualitative studies.

Member-checks (Creswell, 2007) or what Maxwell (2005) designates as “respondent validation” were also an important strategy I incorporated. Member-checks are essential for confirming the accuracy of data collected. I integrated this in several phases of the study including asking study participants to read their transcribed interviews for accuracy. In addition, I offered each participant the opportunity to identify comments they had provided during the interview that they preferred be excluded from the final report, an option none exercised. I included member-checks to limit inadvertently misreporting data, to minimize my potential bias associated with construct validity and to enhance internal validity through the accurate representation of study participants’ reality.

“Rich” data (Maxwell, 2005) and “thick description” (Creswell, 2007) were a component of the study. This included data that “are detailed and varied enough that

they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on (Becker, 1970, cited in Maxwell, 2005, p. 110).

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues associated with the selected site and participants and my role as researcher warranted attention in this study. Of primary concern in my research process was protecting both the school district and the individual participants from any negative consequences that might result from the study. Although the study was not evaluative in nature, the potential for uncovering sensitive information in the course of data collection was a possibility especially as the study focused on tensions and negotiation. From the onset, I was aware that although I would use a pseudonym for the school district in the study, other school leaders in the state who had access to the study could possibly identify it based on their knowledge of state districts and schools within them.

Protecting the anonymity of the individual participants was a priority for me. I included information regarding the individual school settings in which the participants execute their roles. My effort to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of all participants included acquiring informed consent and the use of impersonal identifiers and pseudonyms. It is possible that familiarity with the district and the schools within it would be sufficient to reveal the identity of study participants. I shared this possibility explicitly with participants prior to their agreement to participate in the study. The use of member-checks allowed me a level of protection for individual participants because they were able to remove interview data they considered too sensitive for inclusion in the final report. Given this opportunity, all

participants granted permission for the use of data as transcribed with no information from interviews removed.

My subjectivity as a researcher who is also an employee of the school district chosen for the study was also an ethical consideration. My familiarity with the district, the school business manager program, and individual participants was a concern as regards the collection and interpretation of data. I was fully aware that my insider status provided me with an advantage on understanding the context as well as some of the nuances of participants' responses. I was cautious not to have this be a detriment to my analysis and findings by enlisting a critical friend to provide feedback on the data and issues arising from the research process. This included pushing me to consider alternative explanations.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Data

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the address research question one: how the school business manager position was conceptualized at the district level and how it was implemented at the school site. While the MSDE task force reports gave a general idea of the position, the brief descriptor included in those reports is insufficient for understanding the nuances of the position and how it was operationalized at the school site. Frequently in educational efforts, the disparity between the ideal on paper and the reality of implementation can be significant. A descriptive analysis of the implementation of the position also lends itself to contextualizing how traditional authority was impacted by the addition of the role.

Multiple perspectives were sought regarding the actualization of the role to get a more nuanced understanding of how the school business manager position was integrated into existing organizational leadership at the school site including district leadership, school principals and school business managers themselves. Their descriptions provide insight as to how the school business manager role redistributes both the tasks and authority aspects of school leadership. The chapter also includes case descriptions of each principal and school manager. This offers insight into the possible contextual differences among the study's subjects, significant for this study as the framework employed for analysis assumes a relational component to the power dynamic at the core of organizational tensions.

Conceptualization: District Perspective

Every new initiative in an organization has to have key actors who can champion

its conceptualization and facilitate its journey to actualization. Dr. Kathy Hughes and Jim Mills are the two individuals consistently credited with initiating the school business manager position in Lewis County Public Schools. Dr. Hughes began her educational career as a special education teacher in a neighboring county where she was subsequently promoted to an administrative position at an elementary school. In 1988, she was hired by Lewis County Public Schools as the supervisor of special education, where she earned a reputation for her staunch advocacy for all students. She became assistant superintendent for instruction in 1997 and became a proponent for the school business manager position. As superintendent since 2003, Dr. Hughes has continued to support the role as a means to allow her principals to have more time to focus on instructional leadership.

Jim Mills had more than 20 years experience in the business sector prior to being hired by Lewis County Public Schools as assistant superintendent for administrative services in January 1990. Although he retired from that position in July 2010, he continued to serve in a consulting capacity for the county with the school business manager program being one area in which he has provided guidance and training. Reflecting on his tenure in the county, he identified the school business manager program as “one of the highlights of my career here.”

According to Mr. Mills, the concept of the school business manager had been a topic of conversation between him and the superintendent for several years prior to the Maryland State Department of Education recommendation in 2000. His initial vision was to follow the model of the district leadership, "where I was the business person" and the superintendent and assistant superintendent for instruction could

focus on instructional issues, and never have to be distracted by matters such as "bussing, transportation, food service, construction." As he recalled:

The concept was that you needed to make sure that the principal at your school was the single individual that was responsible for instruction and the academic side of the house. In order to accomplish that you had to find ways to remove what I call administravia, administrative functions away from that person enough so that they had the time, the quality time to spend in the classroom, in the hallways, working with students, working with teachers.

His idea found momentum when Dr. Hughes, then assistant superintendent for instruction, heard of the school business manager model being proposed by MSDE as "one of the strategies that could be used to allow principals to become instructional leaders." She, too, remembered the effort to convince the superintendent to "investigate hiring a school or business manager to run the parts of the school that really the principals' expertise was not well suited to." Her description of the concept echoes that of Mr. Mills not only in the specific tasks that could be allocated to a school business manager but also the intended impact the new position could have on the role of the principal. According to Dr. Hughes, the school business manager would be responsible for

Things like transportation, facilities, oversight of the lunch program, the kinds of issues that didn't have anything to do with instruction which should have then freed the principals up to make more classroom visits either informal or formally and to be more involved in

the professional development delivery for the school.

While Mr. Mills acknowledged that the superintendent was in favor of the proposed position, he also noted that he had lingering questions about how such a role would be received at both the school level and in the larger community. Despite these concerns, the superintendent instructed Mr. Mills and Dr. Hughes to "figure out how you can make it work." The primary parameter they were given by the superintendent, according to Mr. Mills, was that whatever they did, it had to be "budget neutral."

Both Mr. Mills and Dr. Hughes talked about having to find funding within the existing budget and knowing that it had to come from instructional personnel. According to Dr. Hughes, the district supported Maryland School Performance Assessment Program instructional facilitator positions in the schools. While she concedes that these individuals "had great skills to show in the classroom and while they were fairly efficient at providing professional development to the staff," her analysis of student achievement data suggested that MSPAP facilitators did not positively impact teachers instructional practices. Essentially Dr. Hughes suggested that since MSPAP facilitators did not have authority as observers, there was no mechanism for ensuring that teachers were following through on changing their practice. In her reflection, she stressed that by virtue of their position, principals were better poised to effect such changes but needed the time to be in classrooms observing and implementing appropriate professional development. This is what she expected the school business manager position to create, the time for principals to make instruction their priority. In her view, school business managers would assume

authority for “the aspects of school that are important but are not directly related to instruction.”

In describing how the school business manager role was envisioned, Mr. Mills noted that businesses are hierarchical in nature and within that structure, "everyone's job is to make their boss's job easier.” While Dr. Hughes and Mr. Mills both referenced tasks related to transportation, food services, facilities, and construction projects, the list of school business manager responsibilities became more extensive a district committee defined the role. The table below, compiled from the job descriptions of school manager and principal initially developed in April 2002, provides an overview of how the position was planned to distribute roles and responsibilities in the school setting.

Table 4: School Manager and Principal Responsibilities

School Manager Responsibilities	Principal Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision of noncertified staff including hiring, training, work schedules and evaluation • Works with principal and asst super for support services to develop, implement and maintain plan for support services • Manages facility and grounds and related equipment, administers community use, monitors construction and repairs, provides direction for custodians and food service • Assures safety and security • Serves as principal designee for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transportation 2. Substitutes/coverage 3. Preparation and dissemination of effective communication and all media and public relations 4. Staff and student attendance 5. Fundraising issues including PTA and vendors 6. Cafeteria management 7. Management of Crisis Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves as lead administrator of Cooperative Instructional and Administrative Team • Recommends to hire, supervises and evaluates certified and instructional personnel • Supervises the development and implementation of curricula to insure that all students receive an appropriate program of instruction • Develops and has final approval of master schedule and teaching schedules • Ensures the professional development of teaching staff and conducts regularly scheduled staff meetings • Establishes and maintains an effective learning environment for all students • Monitors student academic success

<p>8. Purchase of inventory and supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements, maintains, and develops and administers Board and school-based policies and procedures • Designated administrator in absence of principal • Serves as advisor to principal on budget, personnel, facility, IT, support services • Serves as school resource for implementation of law, regulations, statutes, rules, policies including Teacher Negotiated Agreement • Assures continual monitoring of two way radio • Other duties as assigned by the principal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates to the community all educational programs • Provides decisive leadership in moments of school crisis • Delegates responsibilities as needed • Keeps the superintendent abreast of all accomplishments and issues that affect the school • Performs and task and responsibilities assigned by the superintendent
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The job description established the school business manager as the principal's designee for the allocated tasks, thus conferring decision-making authority for those aspects of school operations. Simultaneously, however, the description also clearly documented that the school business manager reported directly to the principal, thus being subordinate in the organizational hierarchy. Dr. Hughes and Mr. Mills were both explicit in the allocation of authority inherent in the position as well as the subordination implicit in the structure.

Actualization: District Perspective

Both Dr. Hughes and Mr. Mills spoke of a successful implementation of the school business manager position in the Lewis County Public School System. While the job description provided a broad outline of the role of the school business manager, Dr. Hughes described a "very rigorous initial training" for school business managers that was facilitated by Mr. Mills, including issues such as, "training in finance, in food service, support staff negotiations, legislation, school policies and

procedures, all of the things in the organization that they would need to have access to information about."

Both Dr. Hughes and Mr. Mills reported that this training was instrumental in the success of the program actualization at the school site. They were so pleased with the result of the effort that Mr. Mills continued to facilitate monthly meetings that included time for school business managers to problem solve amongst themselves. A review of the minutes of these meetings demonstrated that in addition to Mr. Mills providing information relative to policy and procedures, each school manager was allotted time to share concerns or to pose questions. School business managers' concerns during the first year appear to be focused on seeking clarity regarding policy and procedures as well as establishing the distinction between school issues that needed to be addressed with principals and issues they should address with district personnel. Agenda topics included issues such as contract hours for staff on delayed openings, how school managers were to address police requests to see students in the building, field trip requests and distinction between principal and school manager role in approving them, public relations responsibilities, and how to manage lack of responsiveness with other departments such as maintenance.

Mr. Mills explained that while he worked extensively with school business managers, Dr. Hughes worked with the principals at the onset of the initiative. Routinely he and Dr. Hughes would confer to share what they were seeing in the schools and what they might do to assist in making both principals and school business managers at the school level more effective in their new roles and as teams. Dr. Hughes explained that school business managers were provided with the majority

of the training because "We felt that the principals knew how to do their jobs as instructional leaders" and that it was her perception that principals "felt fairly comfortable with their new role and basically took off with their professional development piece and their instructional leadership piece." She attributed this to the fact that the principals had been involved in developing the job descriptions so basically understood how the job responsibilities were to be allocated. She conceded, however, that, "there were few principals . . . that may have been the 'old model' The transition for them was a little more difficult. . . ." She explained that these individuals were given "assistance." Mr. Mills noted that in hindsight they did a "much better job training the school manager than we did training the principal." He was more explicit in defining the problem that they encountered with some principals than Dr. Hughes. According to Mr. Mills, some principals were not willing to abdicate control to the school business manager position. When asked how these situations were mediated Mr. Mills remembered, "We did an immense amount of counseling with individual managers, most of it with me." The purpose of this counseling was to instill in school managers that

their job literally was to say to the principal, Ms. Principal, Mr.

Principal here is the job description. I know what I am supposed to be doing. I have had some training. I am getting some training now. You don't have to worry about food service. I will do the schedule for the cafeteria. I will watch out for the busses.

In effect, he counseled that it was incumbent upon school business managers to communicate to principals what they could do for them, to make themselves valuable

to the individual and to the organization.

Mr. Mills described a "few misfires" at the start of the school business manager program. He explained that this was primarily because the school managers "never stepped up and actually implemented what their job description was." He noted that the successful managers were those who could make themselves valuable by completing tasks that allowed the principal more time for instructional responsibilities. In addition, he noted that school business manager success was associated with their willingness to present their views to help inform school decision-making. He noted that principals and school business managers who "did the best were the ones who treated each other like peers."

When asked to describe the responsibilities school business managers actualize in their role in the schools, both Mr. Mills and Dr. Hughes spoke generally of the same tasks they described in their concept of the model. Specifically Mr. Mills referenced, food services, transportation, facilities, and support staff. Dr. Hughes summarized the responsibilities of the school business manager as "free[ing] up the principal from those kinds of day-to-day concerns" that include support staff, facility use, supervision of after school events, food services, transportation, ordering supplies. Mr. Mills added reference to the school business manager's responsibilities as regards students including monitoring hallways and student discipline.

While both district administrators could identify the broad categories of responsibilities transferred to the school business manager position, both were vague as to the actual binding, decision-making authority that was implicit in the position. Dr. Hughes situated school business manager authority in the context of the tasks they

completed, “To do their job as intended, school business managers have to have the authority to make decision in the areas they are responsible for in the school.” Mr. Mills concluded that the addition of the school business manager, “creates a completely different structure” for authority. While he was clear to identify the “boss and subordinate” dichotomy in the roles, Mr. Mills noted that “it was never going to work” if there was not “loyalty and trust” between principal and school business manager. According to Mr. Mills, “the best pairs were the ones who treated each other like peers, trusting that each of them brought an expertise that was valuable to the other.”

Actualization: Principal Perspective

While district leadership provided a broad overview of the actualization of the school business manager model, the experiences and perceptions of principals who were closer to the implementation were sought. Principals were considered to have a unique vantage point from which to provide reflections on the school business manager role since they were at the school site where the role was actualized and had a day-to day view of how it was put into practice within their school. In addition, as the ones required to modify their roles to accommodate the new vision for school leadership presented by the addition of a school business manager, principals perceptions offered an understanding of not only the logistics of the change but additional dynamics that influenced its implementation.

Fred Hall

Mr. Hall was hired as a principal in Lewis County the same year school business managers were implemented in the schools. A white male in his sixties, Mr. Hall shared an extensive résumé. He completed his undergraduate degree with a major in economics and worked as a financial analyst for the DuPont Company for three years prior to his career as an educator. Mr. Hall shared that he has been involved in the education field for more than 40 years. He began his career as a high school social studies teacher and after four years was appointed to an assistant principalship. Six years later he became a high school principal and served in one school for three years and then in another high school for 15 years. He retired as an educator in Delaware and after taking a year off, returned to the principal role in 2002 at Westbrook Middle High School in Lewis County Public Schools in Maryland. He served in that position for five years before retiring for the second time in June 2007.

Because Mr. Hall currently lives in another state, interviews were conducted by phone. However, Mr. Hall and I interacted frequently as colleagues in Lewis County. He was known among his staff as being a visible principal who frequently visited classrooms for informal observations he referred to as “drive throughs.” Despite this, it was impossible when he was principal to discern if Mr. Hall was in his office as he tucked his desk in a corner. A large television tuned to sports channels was a prominent fixture in the office. Mr. Hall was a staunch supporter of school athletics as well. He attended all home events with his canon that he would fire to signal his team scoring a soccer goal. Although his desk always appeared in disarray, Mr. Hall was known for his organization, especially his preparation of an agenda for every meeting

he called. A notable feature on each was the start time of meetings, always an odd time such as 10:33, 1:57 or 3:02. He explained this as a strategy to get people's attention and to ensure they were "on time."

Despite his extensive experience prior to coming to Lewis County Public Schools, Mr. Hall had never worked with a school business manager. While he could describe that he was aware that it was a position principals had been involved in creating prior to his arrival to the county, he did not recollect any specific training being provided to him to implement the position. He did explain, however, his understanding of the position as one that was intended to take "a lot of the extraneous stuff off the plate of the school principal" so the principal could be "an instructional leader first and a manager second."

During five years at Westbrook Middle High School, Mr. Hall noted that he had four school business managers. This, he suggested, indicated that, "I have high expectations that I demanded of them." There were several traits that Mr. Hall deemed important for a school business manager, the first of which were loyalty and trust, terms he interchangeably and frequently throughout our first interview. He also noted the importance of being "committed to the job" and being able to forge positive relationships with staff, students, and the community. Being accurate, "knowing when to make a decision and when to seek out some advice," and being "open and sharing with the administrative team" were other qualities he identified.

When asked to describe the responsibilities of the school business manager, Mr. Hall explained that his school managers assumed responsibilities relative to "the day-to-day operations of the school" including supplies and budget, supervision of

secretaries, custodians, and transportation issues. He also shared that the school manager was responsible for scheduling the building, fundraisers, PTO and booster groups, as well as supervising students during after school activities. In sum, he explained, "They insured that the building was open, it was clean, it was operational for the day."

Mr. Hall noted that having a successful school business manager allowed him to be more of an instructional leader. This included greater opportunity for observations, professional development, and data analysis. When probed specifically about the benefits of having a school business manager, Mr. Hall noted, "When they are working with and for you, they take care of the busy stuff that made it hard for me to focus on instruction."

When asked to describe the authority school business managers had, Mr. Hall explained: "Once they understood my expectations and my direction for the school, they had the authority to make decisions within the areas they oversaw. It was important of course that their decisions aligned with my goals." When asked to provide specific examples of binding decisions school business managers would make, Mr. Hall reverted back to the areas of responsibility outlined in the job description, "Decision would be in the areas they were responsible for, things like transportation, building." For Mr. Hall, school business manager authority and decision making power was associated with their specific task allocations. Significant in his description of school business manager authority was his frequent association of their decisions to his own direction for the school, "ultimately I am responsible for all decisions." For Mr. Hall, while school business manager's had

some level of autonomy for carrying out the specifics of their assigned tasks, he remained the positional authority to make the binding decisions as he deemed necessary. In his description, the subordination of the school business manager was frequently invoked.

Doug Smith

Mr. Smith is a White male in his early forties. Orange and black, Essex High School colors, are a staple of his attire, a sign of the obvious school pride, which his verbal comments conveyed as well. Our first interview was held at the district office over a lunch break during a countywide training. While I expressed concern that perhaps we would not have enough time, Mr. Smith suggested we should proceed. He was correct, due in large part by his ability to respond immediately to the questions I posed and the relatively quick pace of his speech. Our second interview took place in Mr. Smith's office at Essex High School. It was a brightly lit room, well organized and business like. Pictures of school sports teams as well as his family were prominent.

Mr. Smith has been an educator for 17 years. The first five of those were spent in the elementary setting as a first, fourth, and fifth grade teacher. After that time, Mr. Smith became an assistant principal in two elementary schools in a neighboring county to Lewis. He was promoted to the position of principal in that county prior to applying and getting the principal position at Johnson Elementary School in 2006. In June 2010, he was transferred to Essex High School where he acquired his first secondary experience. In all, 12 of his 17 years in education have been as an administrator.

Mr. Smith noted that his first experience with a school business manager was when he came to Lewis County as principal of Johnson Elementary. When asked if he had received any training from the county as to the role of the school business manager and how it impacted the role of the principal, he said: "Training consisted of you focus on instruction. They focus on everything else. And then you work it out individually with the person you are working with."

Although he was not among the principals involved in the conceptualization of the model, Mr. Smith shared that the school business manager is a "a very valuable role . . . because anything that is not instructional falls into their job description." Although he believes the role "varies from building to building based on the size and needs and level of that building," in his opinion, school business managers need specific traits to be successful in their role. These he described as: flexibility, organization, the ability to communicate, and the ability to set a goal, plan how they are going to get there and then execute that plan.

Mr. Smith noted that in his experience, the school business manager is responsible for facilities, managing accounts, bus discipline and routes, and plant operations. He conceded however, that while the school business manager is responsible for "everything that is not instructional, the instructional piece does bleed over to it." He explained this further by referencing their responsibilities for classroom space and resources in the classroom that fall in the realm of the school business manager but that also have the potential to directly impact the instructional process.

In addition to these responsibilities, Mr. Smith noted that school business managers interact with students on issues relative to obligations, the 1-1 Laptop

program, bus discipline, and scheduling. They also have a role in the community "As any other staff member we have." From his perspective, school business managers also need to work with departments at the central office.

Mr. Smith shared that his school business managers usually arrives at school before he does. He characterized the typical day for a school manager to begin with substitutes and classroom coverage. It might then involve resolving bus discipline issues, organizing attendance incentives, and addressing financial issues. The school business manager then does lunch duty, "keeping it safe and orderly." He described the afternoon for school business managers as "spent doing much of the same thing, whatever his business is at hand." The day ends with bus duty and preparing for the next day.

While Mr. Smith's description of the actual functions of a school business manager were somewhat vague in comparison to descriptions offered by other participants in the study, he did reiterate a common benefit that was one of the goals of the program

With the building manager in place, it gives us that opportunity to be in classrooms more frequently and to spend the follow-up time with teachers talking and discussing through the instructional process and making corrections and changes where necessary. Crazy things come up throughout the course of your day that you need to address, but having a building manager there takes away the stuff, everything else that is not instructional so you can focus on the classroom.

Mr. Smith identified specific areas where authority previously in his purview as a

principal would be reallocated to his school business managers. These areas included, “field trip stuff, the cash receipts, . . . approving leave, building use, . . . anything with the physical plant in terms of what needs to be repaired, where money needs to be spent for maintenance.” Mr. Smith also referenced the school business manager being a member of the leadership team:

They are a part of our administration team and we all meet as an administrative team and we present ourselves as our administration team. It takes all of us working together to make this school run so we are the decision-making team.

For him, this reality makes it imperative that the school business manager to “make good decisions so I don’t have to think about the things on his side of the house.”

His description of his interactions with the school business manager underscores the belief that the school business manager will take care of “things on his side of the house” without the need for direct input from the principal, evidence of authority vested in the position. According to Mr. Smith, “The things that are on his side of the shop, he keeps over there and doesn’t bother me with them until a certain time when we would get together to debrief. He is not running to me with everything that he has going.” In this respect, Ms. Smith suggests that school business managers had broad authority for decision-making within their sphere of control. While Mr. Smith did share a belief reminiscent of Mr. Hall’s that, “the principal really has to answer for everything that happens in the building. You are directly responsible for everything and everyone,” his response suggests that he recognized that he had to cede some aspects of control to the school business manager position: “In a school the

size of Essex, it is impossible for one person to do it all. Some things I just have to let my school business manager handle.” Mr. Smith’s statements suggest that while he recognized his ultimate positional authority as principal, he acknowledged a degree of dependence on the school business manager to assume responsibility for some aspects of its functioning.

Kim Grant

A tall, White woman in her early fifties, Ms. Grant needs no introductions anywhere in Lewis County. Her longevity as an educator is one factor in this as is her effusive personality. There is no mistaking when she enters a room because she is quick to greet one by name and readily recalls personal information that she uses to engage one in friendly conversation. She is quick to smile and has a boisterous laugh that was a hallmark of our conversations together. She is known for speaking her mind and being decisive in her decision-making. She is also recognized for frequently invoking data to support her efforts and is acknowledged for her focus on “students first.” In all settings, Ms. Grant appears to be a busy woman, moving from one task to another, however, she has the ability to make one feel like the center of attention when conversing with her. This was certainly the case during our interviews. Both of these were held in her office at the board office, a location she is new to in her first year as the appointed assistant superintendent for administrative services. Her office was orderly, but definitely showed signs of having been worked in that day with papers strewn on the desk and policy manuals stacked near the computer. A group photo of the Essex Class of 2010 hung on the wall and there were pictures of her sons, two graduates of Essex now in college and another a junior at the

high school.

I offered to reschedule our initial interview because the meeting we had just attended together took longer than anticipated. She assured me that was not necessary. I asked her about her new position and she smiled as she pointed to facility plans and building specifications and explained that there was “a lot for me to learn.” She shared that much of her work was the same as when she was principal and noted that often problems could be solved if “you just take the time to listen to people. Sometimes they just need to be heard.”

Ms. Grant had a lot to say and spoke rapidly and enthusiastically despite the late hour of the day. She began by summarizing her 28 years of experience as a public educator. Her teaching experience was at both the elementary and middle school level. She taught for five years outside of Maryland before she was hired by Lewis County to teach at Glenwood Middle School in 1988. She taught there for two years and was then named an administrative intern, a position she describes, “as basically was the assistant principal but being paid as a teacher.” The following year she became an assistant principal at the school noting that, “I did not leave teaching at a time where I thought I was ready for administration.” Instead, she was encouraged to move to the position by her principal who was retiring and who knew the new principal who was coming from out of state could use Ms. Grant’s expertise. Ms. Grant remembered the turmoil in the community when he was “ousted,” a year later and the desire of the county to “hire a principal from within” to replace him. As she noted with a laugh, “I was in the wrong place at the wrong time when I became principal in 1992.” She served as principal at Glenwood for six years before moving

to Cedar Elementary, a request she made to the superintendent because she had three of her own children under the age of five and felt that she needed a smaller school with fewer demands. She remained there as principal for four years until being appointed by the superintendent to Johnson Elementary in 2000. In 2006, she was transferred to Essex High School.

Ms. Grant explained that she got her first school business manager in her second or third year at Johnson Elementary School. Although she selected the individual for the position, he "only lasted to December" because he could not "multi-task." As she recalled, the problem was so extreme that "It was becoming where I couldn't even do my job because I was redoing some of his job." Joan Rogers replaced him and although "It took a while for Joan and I to solidify that role, it worked much better once she came on board."

Ms. Grant did not share any specific training she received relative to implementing the school business manager model. However, she was one of the principals involved in the writing of the job descriptions and served on the initial interview committee. As she recalled, "The training was mostly for the school business managers, not principals."

Ms. Grant shared that the role of the school business manager was then and remains now to assist in "clearing the plate for principals to become instructional leaders." According to her, the school business managers were intended to "take on some of the tasks the we didn't like to do sometimes as principals."

Ms. Grant explained that based on her experience it is important for the school business managers be able to multi-task and to be detail orientated. In her words,

they need to be "Someone who could be strong when it came to dotting the Is and crossing the Ts as far as it came to running the business of school." In addition, they need to be "a person that could make sure they were surveying all parties when making decisions and being able to forecast the possibilities of consequences" in addition to being "approachable to the community."

Ms. Grant shared that the primary role of the school business manger is to "foresee and oversee the running of the building when it comes to logistics." She included in this the tasks of overseeing building use, substitutes, attendance, transportation, food services, and plant operations. Another aspect she identified was the responsibility for ensuring that staff was complying with policy, a responsibility that often included the school business manger having "to be the heavy one." She noted as well the role of the school business manager in "building relationships with community members" and "making sure those people are feeling welcome in the building."

Ms. Grant gave an extensive explanation of the typical day of the school business manager. She explained that their day would start with a "visual check of the property" upon arrival followed by checking on staff attendance and substitute coverage for the day. Prior to the official start of the day, school business managers would also attend to any issues left by the night custodians. Then, they would make sure "people are where they need to be security wise for when students arrive." They would also complete building walkthroughs to examine the facility and check on building usage for upcoming events. During the course of the day, they would engage in a "variety of things" including budgets, scheduling, dealing with support

staff issues, lunch duty, substitutes, bus discipline, parent concerns, maintenance issues. In addition, her school business managers worked on the master schedule, organized awards assemblies, and attended discipline meetings with the administrative team.

As regards authority, Ms. Grant noted:

There were many decisions the school business manager just makes. I can't even begin to name them all but the obvious ones would be on issues that arise in their area of responsibility like bus discipline, support staff, building use, day-to day expenditures.

She acknowledged, however, that the actual authority structure was complicated because although the school business manger took on decision making in many areas:

I think everyone in the building knows the school manager's job is pretty much under me. So I do think that they know that I supervise the school manager, but I also think that they know the school manager supervises certain people whether it is support staff, or security, or some of those people that they have under their belt. People will try to undermine the school business manager's authority by coming to me if they think they can get an answer or decision they like better. So you have to be careful not to let that happen by trusting the school business manger to do his or her job. This means I have to let them make decisions.

Like Mr. Smith and Mr. Hall, Ms. Grant associated school business manager authority and decision making with their specific tasks. However, she was more

explicit in extending their influence beyond their specific sphere of control. Frequent in her responses were references to school business managers contributing “on a wide range of issues” as members of the leadership team, “sometimes your school business manager just has a perspective no one else does and that can be really valuable. There were many times that helped me make a better decision.” In this statement, Ms. Grant introduces a level of shared, collaborative engagement with her school business manager that was not expressed by the other two principals in the study.

Actualization: School Business Manager Perspective

A third vantage point from which to construct an understanding of the actualization of the school business manager position is that of school business managers themselves. While district leadership and principals offer meaningful insights, school business managers live the position each day. Thus, their perspective on their role is integral to understanding what the position is and how it impacts school leadership dynamics by distributing tasks and decision-making responsibilities.

Ken Stevens

The first thing one notices about Mr. Stevens is how tall he is. At 6’6”, it was easy to see him approaching the main office at Essex High School for our interview. A White male in his mid thirties, he is known by all in the county to always wear shirt and tie during the school year, even on casual dress days. Mr. Stevens’ demeanor was immediately welcoming with a genuine smile accompanying his verbal greeting. This was not surprising, because Mr. Stevens is known for being well liked by all

who interact with him. As one teacher shared with me as I waited for Mr. Stevens, “Even when he tells you no or asks you to do something, you can’t get mad. You know he does everything he can to do his job well and to make yours easier.”

Our interviews were held in Mr. Stevens’ office. Located behind the two receptionists and nestled between the principal and assistant principals’ spaces, his is the only office directly visible when one enters the main office of the school. If Mr. Stevens is sitting at his desk, all who enter the main office know it for they have direct sight of him. The office itself was sparse with a desk and chair and two additional chairs on the opposite side of the desk for visitors. When we entered the room at the start of the interview, there was only a laptop on the desk and a few papers; Mr. Stevens added two cell phones and a bus radio as he sat down. Two cork boards were visible covered with papers, some of which resembled schedules. Scattered among them were a few drawings that Mr. Stevens indicated were from his own children whom he pointed out in the two pictures behind his desk. The many binders neatly lined up on the shelf easily outnumbered these photographs. When asked about the binders, Mr. Stevens indicated “Policy. We have a lot of those.” When he noticed that I was looking at the one, framed wall hanging in the room, Mr. Stevens shared, “It was left here by the last school manager. Not quite my style, but I haven’t had time to replace it.”

Mr. Stevens is a soft-spoken man, so much so that at times it was difficult to discern some of his responses on the recording of the interview with out turning the volume all the way up. Throughout our conversations, however, he appeared thoughtful in his responses; he often paused before responding and always maintained

a relatively slow pace of his speech. Observation of Mr. Stevens at the monthly school business manager meetings confirmed that this was his typical demeanor.

Mr. Stevens is currently in his 10th year as a school business manager in Lewis County. He began his tenure in the county at Johnson Elementary. After three years there, he interviewed for the position at Westbrook Middle High School. He worked at Westbrook for six years until being advised in June 2011 that he was being transferred to Essex High School. In his time in Lewis County, he has worked with a total of four different principals. He shared, "I had no aspirations to be a school business manager." Instead, he explained that he saw the ad in the newspaper and applied for the position since he met the minimum requirements, including a bachelor's in business administration. His experience prior to becoming a school business manager was in the private sector as "a collections officer/management trainee" and a position in regional sales management. Mr. Stevens noted that his collections background "has paid off in this role because a lot of it is having cordial contact with parents about financial obligations." In addition, Mr. Stevens confirmed information shared by Mr. Mills that he had also been a substitute teacher in a neighboring county. Even with this background, Mr. Mills noted in speaking about Mr. Stevens that, "Of the original managers that were hired, he had the least experience, like hardly any. He had never supervised anybody." Despite that, Mr. Mills remembered that he, "interviewed really, really well, was really articulate."

As we began talking about the school business manager position, Mr. Stevens noted that he is often asked what the role of the school business manager is when he shares that is what he does as a profession. He explained that his "stock response is

that the school business manager is someone whose role is to allow the principal more time to focus on instruction . . .the administrative side is taken off the principal's plate and given to the school business manager."

According to Mr. Stevens the county did provide training when the program was initiated and acknowledged that it was Jim Mills who developed and implemented the training. While he could not recall specific details of the training, he did reference the manual he had been provided and offered to find it for my review. Despite the training, Mr. Stevens confessed, "It was basically learn as you go in the schools."

The majority of our first interview focused on Mr. Stevens' understanding of his role as a school business manager. Mr. Stevens noted that ordering supplies, staff attendance, and involvement with teachers as regards extracurricular issues were common concerns. He shared that he "deal[s] with students quite often" as regards lockers and cafeteria issues, monitoring hallways, and in his responsibility as "the administrator" at extracurricular events. Primarily though, he noted that his involvement with students is most direct in the area of bus discipline. While acknowledging that he had not had training in discipline of students, he takes "kind of a common sense approach." In reference to his role relative to parents and community, Mr. Stevens explained that school business managers are "supposed to be the community liaison or PR person" responsible for press releases that reflect positively on the school. This he noted as sometimes being "challenging" to accomplish.

At Essex High School, Mr. Stevens identified staff attendance and leave as the task that requires the majority of his time. His role in preparing student and staff

handbooks is a "sizable responsibility" as well but occurs during the summer months when school is not in session. When asked to describe a typical day, Mr. Stevens laughed. He shared that his workday starts at 6:30 am and that the first hour prior to students arriving is spent on staff attendance to insure that there is adequate coverage in classrooms each period. A portion of the day is spent on paperwork relative to staff leave, building use, and finances. Lunch duty is followed by more paperwork in the afternoon and then often a game to supervise which means that his day does not end until 8:00 or 8:30 p.m.

In a follow up interview, Mr. Stevens was asked to recall the events of that particular day. His reflections were more specific than his original response and suggested that there was actually little uninterrupted time in his day for paperwork. His day began with not enough substitutes for all of the staff who were out, a problem that required that he develop a plan for using other teachers during their planning time to insure that students were not left unsupervised. Prior to the first bell, there was a bus issue that included having to meet the bus to speak to the driver and then the students before contacting the parents. Once students were in class, he had a meeting with a vendor and central office staff regarding specifications for a sound system purchase. He then went to his office to complete paperwork but was interrupted by a call for assistance with a student altercation in the hallway. Next on his schedule was lunch duty followed by leave reconciliation paperwork and a meeting with the administrative staff for master scheduling. He reported that he was called out of that meeting to handle a substitute problem and then to respond to parent concern regarding a theft. Once these issues were resolved, he met with the athletic director

to review accounts and then completed two mid-year conferences with probationary support staff. After dismissal of students, he worked on substitute coverage for the next day and coordinating the custodial staff, security plans, and facility for the playoff basketball game. When asked, he shared that it had been a “pretty typical day.”

Mr. Stevens identified being organized and having the ability to multi-task as the key qualities necessary for success as a school business manager. He contrasted working in the private business sector with work in schools noting that in the former it is “very focused, you might have a lot to do but it is a lot of the same thing” whereas in the school setting, “Here it is a lot to do on a lot of different areas.” Finally, he noted that one needs a good “demeanor to be non-confrontational” with students and adults, “It’s challenging and I do feel that not everyone is cut out to be in a school setting.”

When asked about the formal authority he has, specifically the ability he has to make binding decisions, Mr. Stevens responded: “That’s a good question. I guess I have never thought about what I do in that way.” His initial response focused on a specific aspect of his work,

Well there is a certain level of authority given when it comes to staff attendance that is kind of innate in the position. You are responsible for that so support and certificated staff members have to report to you on that in that regard. So that is pretty easy and everybody knows that but as far as like formal authority when it comes to other aspects of the job its kind of, you kind of have to work your way into it.

Within this response is an indication of the complexities of power associated with the new role, that authority may have been outlined in the job description, the actual extent of it required more “work.” When asked what he meant by work, he explained: “You need to get to know your principal, the school and community. You have to figure out what needs need to be met.”

Understanding not just the stated authority of the position but how it was actualized in practice is best reflected in Mr. Stevens’ description of his workday rather than his direct response to the question regarding authority. When asked whether or not he had discussed his decisions regarding discipline of a bus situation, the purchase of a sound system or sports uniforms, his handling of a parent concern or his personnel decisions relative to a substitute and a para-professional, Mr. Stevens noted that each was “independent of the principal” and that he had not solicited the principal’s input or perspective before acting. When asked if he would share information regarding any of the above issues with the principal, Mr. Stevens identified only the sound system purchase as something he would follow up with the principal as it “is a pretty significant ticket item.” This reflection led him to elaborate with the following:

I think that in each of my placements I have had a great deal of authority to do what I need to do to get that job done which, now that I think about it, includes hundreds of decisions a day. Leave requests, purchasing decisions, bus problems are everyday things that come to mind. Then there are those things you do like vendor contracts that might be coming up which includes pictures, yearbook even just water,

soda machine, snack machine, whatever. There is just a lot of stuff that goes into that you might only do once a year. Once it's done it doesn't register anymore, whether it's the daily stuff or the more infrequent. The school manager absorbs different aspects of the school operation as you establish yourself in the job. Sometimes its because you see things that need doing and items the principals kind of pushed away seeing that the school business manager could handle doing. Either way, I have pretty broad authority to make decisions. It just seems to happen, you start to have more and more responsibility.

While Mr. Stevens did not initially delineate specific authority or readily name his decision making powers, his responses suggested that rather than a sharing of leadership, the school business manager position was more of a bifurcation of responsibilities and authority based on specific roles within the organization.

Grace Strong

Grace Strong, a White woman in her early fifties, was someone well known to me by sight prior to the start of this study. Since Essex High School is the largest facility in the county, most meetings including opening day ceremonies, professional development and school board meetings are held there. Each time I had the opportunity to be there, Ms. Strong could be found coordinating logistics of the event. While there was always a cordial greeting exchanged between us, there was never opportunity for any further conversation. Having interviewed Mr. Mills who expressed that "She was the most successful school manager and the person who most fully understood the concept and more importantly could actually implement it,"

I was anxious to meet with her to seek her perspective on her role.

After eight and a half years as a school business manager in Lewis County, Ms. Strong began a new position in June 2011. She had been asked to serve on the interview committee to recommend a new administrative assistant for the superintendent. After being unsuccessful in finding the right candidate, the superintendent asked Ms. Strong to consider accepting the role herself. While not intending to change positions at the time, Ms. Strong accepted the new role.

Both of my interviews with Ms. Strong were held in the morning prior to the start of her workday in her new office adjacent to the superintendent's office. I arrived at 6:40 in the morning, 20 minutes early and planned to sit in the car to collect my thoughts. When I arrived in the parking lot, however, Ms. Strong was turning on the lights in the building and opening the blinds in the offices. She graciously welcomed me and indicated that she liked to arrive early to prepare for the day.

Ms. Strong's office was impeccably organized, no signs of papers anywhere. A large screen computer was already turned on when I sat across from her at her desk. Throughout both of our interviews, pictures of her family scrolled across the screen, visible to me but not her as she kept her back to the screen as she faced me to respond to my questions. Other than that, the office appeared exactly as it had when her predecessor was there, no personal items to distinguish it as distinctly her space. During both interviews, Ms. Strong would pause briefly before responding. Her responses suggest that this was not because she was unsure of an answer, rather that she was ensuring that her thoughts were expressed as she intended them. Her speech was not rushed, instead suggested the "calmness" Dr. Hughes had referenced in her

interview.

Ms. Strong was hired in January of the first year of the school business manager program to replace one of the “misfires” who was asked to leave mid-year. She began as a school business manager in the county at Westbrook Middle High School with Fred Hall as her principal. She only stayed at Westbrook for the remainder of that school year then transferred to Essex High School where she worked with three different principals during her eight years there including Kim Grant and Doug Smith. Mr. Mills suggests that her decision to leave Westbrook was due to the fact that “she could do more than she was allowed to do and she also wanted a bigger canvas on which to paint.” His assessment was substantiated in my second interview with Ms. Strong when she indicated that her impression was that Mr. Hall had “A rigid interpretation of how he managed” and could only be “pushed so far” by her efforts. Her reflection suggests her interest in not only the formal authority of her position but in exerting influence.

The impetus for Ms. Strong’s seeking the school business manager position initially was not to escape her work in the business sector but rather to cut down on the commute she was required to do as part of her management position. In her words, “As I moved into higher level positions it involved me commuting to the western shore . . . so I was looking for something closer to home.” Of the school managers in the study, Ms. Strong had the most an extensive background experience, what she described as a “perfect blend” for the requirements of a school business manager. She began her work career as a music teacher In Lewis County, three years of which was as choral director at Essex High School. While she noted that it had

been many years since she had worked in schools, she stated that she had an understanding of schools and school systems, in particular Lewis Public Schools that was beneficial for her role as a school manager. She left education and began her career in business as a way to support her husband in his electrical business. She eventually moved out of that field to get "back into a more normal career." She took a position in research and development where she honed her computer skills and discovered that she "enjoyed management of projects, people, departments." Her efforts ultimately led her to a position as "vice president of a national company." In total, her experience as a manager encompassed about 15 years.

Since Ms. Strong was hired by Lewis County mid-year, she missed the initial training. She, however, credits Jim Mills with providing her with individual training and notes that she described as "very thorough." She also referenced the training manual that was made available to her and served as a resource. She indicated that if she had questions when she first began in the job, she felt comfortable contacting other school business managers in the county or calling Mr. Mills directly for clarification of policy.

When asked to describe the role of the school business manager, Ms. Strong explained "the concept as that of removing a lot of the non-instructional responsibilities from the principal and assistant principals so that they could focus on instruction."

Specific aspects of her responsibilities as a school business manager included facilities and building use, cafeteria oversight, supervision of support staff, transportation, bus discipline, field trips, budget, staff attendance and leave requests,

safety and security, and crisis management. She identified key areas that monopolized the majority of her time as a school business manager to include staff attendance, building issues, and student issues including laptops, lockers or discipline. Another item she noted as well was "what the priorities were for that week from the principal's standpoint."

Ms. Strong described a typical day as a school business manager as starting with staff attendance issues including insuring coverage for classes and plans for instruction. She would also address any building issues that custodial staff forwarded. Then "make sure everybody was posted appropriately to control, to have supervision of the students" as they entered for the start of the day. She referenced transportation issues including bus discipline as a possible task she might need to address as well as the possibility of an "event scheduled, let's say an assembly" that she would need to coordinate with "the appropriate folks." Student issues she might address could include a locker issue or the enrollment of a new student. With staff, she noted there would be additional coverage issues for meetings, conversations regarding field trip requests, or contract issues. Ms. Strong noted that she interacted daily with parents as well on issues including questions regarding discipline or proposed fundraisers. Lunch duty was frequently followed by catching up on paperwork related to purchase orders and inventory and responding to emails. Daily, she would also coordinate the meetings and activities that were planned for after school and begin planning for the next day.

In identifying important qualities for a school business manager to possess, Ms. Strong identified being organized as essential. In addition, she noted that school

business managers need to have good communication skills, a financial background, some experience with personnel issues, and computer proficiency to be successful in the school setting.

Ms. Strong's response regarding her authority as a school business manager was most succinct of all participants in the study:

If I am given general responsibilities I try to deal with those fairly independently always keeping the principal informed, but I believed it was my job to deal with them and not, I guess, what I call bother the principal with a bunch of details because the concept was you take care of that role so that they do not need to.

Like Mr. Stevens, Ms. Strong located her decision-making within the structure of her areas of responsibility.

Joan Rodgers

Although we have worked in the same county for many years, I had never formally met Joan Rogers until the day of our first interview. A tall White woman with long dark hair and glasses, she appeared younger than her actual age which she declared as in her fifties. When I arrived, I found her in the main office where she was thanking two women for their help that day. During the interview, she explained that they had been exceptionally helpful with coverage for individualized education plan meetings that kept teachers out longer than she had anticipated. As she ushered me to her office, she apologized in advance for the possible distraction of the bus radio, but she needed to monitor it to insure that all of the students made it home safely. Twice during our first interview a bus driver called in for her assistance. The

calls required that she use the student data system to find contact information for the child's parent. She called, introduced herself as "Ms. Joan," advised them that the bus was waiting for them to pick up and then followed up with the driver to see that someone had actually met the child. I asked her about her preference for Ms. Joan, to which she replied: "I am Ms. Joan at work, not Ms. Rogers. It forms a better relationship."

Unlike all of the other interviews in the study, this interview had multiple distractions, none of which seemed to fluster Ms. Joan. Instead, she handled whatever task had interrupted her thought and then asked for a reminder of "where were we?" These disruptions included a brief conversation with her principal, a call from a teacher who had a car problem, a custodian with a repair request, and two student issues. The distractions gave me an opportunity to survey Ms. Joan's office. Unlike all of the other offices I had been in, there was much to take in. Curtains adorned the window and a tablecloth covered the small round table that was on the opposite side of the room from her desk. Baskets full of toys and children's books filled the shelves as did pictures of her family. Paper, crayons, and colored pencils were located almost everywhere in the room in neat containers. A large whiteboard hung across from her desk with notes regarding upcoming events. Interspersed among them were messages in children's handwriting that read, "I heart Ms. Joan" and "Ms. Joan is the best."

Although Ms. Joan indicated that she has been a school business manager for seven and a half years, she had actually been in the position for nine years at the time of the interview. This miscalculation may have been in part related to the fact that

prior to becoming the school business manager, she worked as a secretary for more than 10 years. Ms. Joan explained that she sought the school business manager position because as secretary of Johnson Elementary School, she was “already doing 90% of what they were requiring.” She recalled that when the job was originally posted, she was not considered for the position since she did not have a four-year degree. After the failure of the initial school business manager, her principal at the time, Kim Grant “strongly suggested that I apply.” She smiled as she recalled that Jim Mills “really did not want to hire” her, and later admitted to her that that was a mistake on his part. Mr. Mills did indicate in his interviews that Ms. Joan was initially hired because “Kim (Grant) always gets what she wants.”

Ms. Joan explained that prior to moving to Madison in 1990 she had been an operations office manager in a Savings and Loans. At that time, few jobs were available so she took a position as a school secretary at Johnson because “I like children.” She shared that her experience as the school secretary prepared her for her role as a school business manager since in that role, “Basically you did a lot of the school business manager duties” before the position was created.

All of her experience has been at Johnson Elementary. During her tenure as school business manager at Johnson, she has worked with three principals including Ms. Grant and Mr. Smith. As earlier noted, since she was hired mid-year, Ms. Joan missed the training initially provided to school business managers. Mr. Mills met with her to review the materials in the school manager-training manual but she shared, “since I had been here for so long, I pretty much knew everything.”

Ms. Joan acknowledges “It is not an easy thing to describe” the school business

manager position “to someone who isn't familiar with the school system.” When asked, however, she notes that she usually explains that she “handle[s] facility issues, attendance issues with students and staff, anything that doesn't pertain to curriculum.” According to her, her responsibilities to the principal include “everything.” Specifically she noted that because of her efforts as regards substitutes, bus discipline, maintenance, cafeteria, supplies, student attendance, her principal “doesn't have to deal with any of that.” Besides her efforts with student attendance and supervision of the cafeteria, Ms. Joan also noted that she sometimes mentors students. As regards parents and the community, she explained that, “if the APs and principal are not available and they [parents] come in and really want to see somebody, I will go ahead and have them come in and discuss any issue . . . if it is something I can handle, I will.”

Ms. Joan claimed that no one specific aspect consumed the majority of her time because “There are interruptions here continuously.” These interruptions she identified as “somebody who needs something,” field trip issues, a sick student. When asked to describe a typical day, Ms. Joan laughed and explained, “there is no such thing as a typical day.” When prompted to consider the day of our interview, she noted that it had started with ensuring that the substitutes were present and prepared for the day. She then had bus duty that included “a couple of issues.” The majority of the morning encompassed working with the principal and a secretary on a “guardianship problem with a parent” which included her having to search policy to find paperwork to help the principal figure out what they needed. She then assisted with a “runaway child” as well as a sick child whose parent had no transportation.

There was then lunch duty from 11:00-1:25. The guardianship issue continued into the afternoon, another “runaway child,” and “one of our ED children went off” which required that she assist one of the assistant principals with the situation since the principal and other APs were in IEP meetings. She addressed some field trip issues and reviewed her substitute schedule for the Maryland School Assessment testing.

Ms. Joan shared that the school business manager suits her as she enjoys multi-tasking and accomplishing things. However, “my heart is really the kids . . . that's the reason I have been here for so long because of the kids.” Ms. Joan identified flexibility as an important quality of school business managers and the need for them to “like the job and the people in order to make it all work.”

When asked about her level of authority, Ms. Joan indicated that her longevity at the school provided her with a significant degree of authority. When probed to describe this more, Ms. Joan conceded, “I pretty much do what I need to do and make the decisions I need to make.” Like Mr. Stevens, her efforts in daily practice were rarely directed by the principal and instead reflected a level of authority her position afforded her for decision-making related to her assigned tasks. Ms. Joan also suggested a different level influence beyond her designated authority with references to her interaction with other staff members, “I think I also have established myself with everyone in the building and in our community. They know they can come to me and I can help them.”

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to address the first research question in the study. Describing the conceptualization and actualization of the school business manager

position in Lewis County Public Schools to develop an understanding of how the school business manager position attempted to reallocate tasks and thus activate a level of shared leadership within the school organization. While the Maryland State Department of Education recommendation outlined a general scope of the position, providing a more detailed description of the county's implementation further delineates the manner in which specific tasks were reallocated from the principal's responsibility to the role of the school business manager.

Participant responses indicate that all had the same general understanding of the concept of the school business manager position. The language invoked reflected the MSDE concept of reallocating tasks to foster time for principals to focus on instructional issues rather than the managerial aspects of day-to-day school operations. Reflections on the actualization of the role were also consistent, with facilities, attendance, transportation, and food services named by all participants as key responsibilities of the school business manager. Generally, school managers articulated a greater number of tasks within their sphere of influence including budgeting, supervision of extra-curricular activities, and engagement with parents and students. Principals and district leaders were more likely to reference the broad job outlines. Principals also suggested that they had more oversight of school business manager authority, especially in the initial stages of their relationship with school business managers. For their part, school business managers suggested a greater degree of autonomy for binding decision-making in the execution of their role.

The chapter also provided a context to the study by identifying the key actors involved in the planning and implementation of the school business manager

initiative. This is important for understanding the dynamics that emerged at the school site, including relevant precursors to tensions, individual perspectives that facilitated or potentially impeded implementation and activated micropolitical strategies between individual participants. As the review of principal perspectives suggests, some were more receptive than others to the change based in part on their own experiences and view of leadership within their schools. Thus school business managers' roles were influenced not only by their understanding of the job and their personal leadership styles, but also the necessity to interact within different school cultures and parameters established by principals within those settings. It is in this context that micropolitical dynamics have the potential to emerge.

Chapter 5: Findings

Overview

From a micropolitical perspective, change is frequently a precursor to tensions that require negotiation among the actors involved. This is especially true in situations in which established norms of power are contested. While the addition of the school business manager position in Lewis County Public Schools was enacted to relieve principals of some of the demands associated with their role, initiating the position introduced new challenges to the leadership paradigm. This chapter focuses on exploring the tensions that emerged between principals and school business managers in the initial stages of implementing their new roles. In addition, the chapter seeks to identify strategies each employed to navigate those tensions. An analysis of data from three school principals and three school business managers suggests that both experienced challenges as they defined and redefined their roles and employed strategies to navigate these tensions. The emergent themes from the cross case analysis are organized based on the following research questions:

2. What tensions emerge in the initial stages as principal and school business manager define their roles and relationship in their organizational setting?
3. How do principals and school business managers negotiate these tensions to operationalize their roles?

Tensions

Study participants were consistent in their support for the addition of the school business manager position. Both principals and school business managers credited

the role with allowing principals to focus more time on the instructional aspects of schools rather than the being encumbered with management issues essential for the functioning of the organization. However, interview data also suggests that initially, participants struggled to establish a shared understanding of the actual degree of authority and decision-making power school business managers were to be afforded in their sites. All could articulate the broad parameters outlined in the job description, but their personal experiences suggest that merely designating authority in a job description does not insure its implementation. Instead, tensions emerged as principals and school business managers attempted to define their respective roles. Issues of power had to be negotiated within an organizational construct that espouses egalitarian ideals but adheres to bureaucratic norms.

Ceding Control of Tasks and Decision-making

The predominate tension that emerged from the implementation of the new role from the perspective of both principals and school business managers was the challenge principals faced in ceding control of areas previously within their authority. This included both tasks and the decision-making that accompanied responsibilities for those areas of work. Mr. Hall addressed this issue more than once in each of the two interviews noting:

The first real challenge working with a school business manager was to be able to step back and allow the school business manger to do his/her job. Having been a school principal for 18 years prior . . . stepping back and allowing the school manager to do the day-to-day operations of the school without my micromanaging him/her was the

first challenge.

One specific example he gave of relinquishing his authority was the renovation process that began while he was at Westbrook. According to him: “It was the school manager who served on the district-wide renovation committee as opposed to the principal which was certainly very new to me. In the past, I had always been directly involved.” While he acknowledged that he thought the school business manager was competent to do this task, his difficulty emanated from his belief that: “It’s my building and I have responsibility for it and the people in it. I wasn’t ready to be getting second-hand information or someone else making decisions for the school.”

For Mr. Hall, ceding control to establish the authority of the school business manager was not as simple as a job description and the reallocation of tasks. Instead, he firmly associated initial tensions with the role with the his own position of authority in the school:

The bottom line was I was going to make the final decision. It was my name on the school profile. I was the one who would get the call from the superintendent or the assistant superintendent. The principal is the one who has to answer to the folks above you relative to a decision made at the school level.

Ms. Grant also identified relinquishing aspects of the traditional authority associated with the role of principal as a challenge. Although she was one of the principals who originally served on the committee that conceptualized the school business manager role and outlined the job responsibilities, Ms. Grant noted, “It was harder to actually make it happen than it was to think about the idea of the position.”

Like Mr. Hall, she shared that relinquishing responsibility to the school business manager: “That was really hard for me in the beginning. It was really hard for me because I was a school manager.” Ms. Grant acknowledged: “In the beginning I was not sold on whether this was going to work. Before I had a school manager, I was a school manager. That was what I did. It’s hard to stop doing what you have always done.” For her: “There was a big shift. I was a school manager and I didn’t really know it at the time because I think that’s really what most principals are.” She elaborated on this by noting that prior to the school business manager position:

I really was not an instructional leader. I did do in-service with staff and I did do observations with staff, but 90% of my day was either building use, taking care of transportation, figuring out schedules, covering lunch duty, planning testing, doing all of the things the school manager does. . . I wasn’t able to actually sit in on team meetings and department meetings and those kind of things because I was doing the school manager piece.

Unlike Mr. Hall, Ms. Grant located the initial tension of abdicating control to the school business manager not as a compromise to her authority, but rather as a matter of convenience. She explained:

There was an initial period of time when school business managers were learning the job. It was really hard for me because there were a lot of times when people would come to me with a question or concern that the school manager deals with, I could give them an answer just like (*snaps fingers*) that. Instead of just continuing to do what I had

always done, I had to stop myself so the school business manager could learn to do his job.

Despite her desire “to make sure things get done,” Ms. Grant was emphatic in noting, “I just had to learn to give up some control so I could actually focus on instruction.” This she stated, “wasn’t easy” but also recognized that the position “would never work unless I did. It’s not something I could micro-manage and still have benefit from.”

Mr. Smith offered a similar reflection to that of Mr. Hall and Ms. Grant in terms of initially understanding the potential of the position, sharing that it was “hard to figure out what was my job and what was the school business manager’s.” He presents a different perspective to that reoccurring theme; however, having become a principal in Lewis County Public Schools after the school business manager position was well established. Thus, he entered his schools new to the concept while the school business managers were well entrenched in their roles within the schools.

When I came onboard, they were already doing their jobs so I had to try to figure out what that meant for my role as principal. A lot of what they were doing was what I had been used to doing. It was a little bit difficult to step out of that role being a principal who did it all to strictly focusing on instruction.

In some instance, he explained that there were “some stressors” because “I felt some of the decisions they would make where ones I should have control over.” When asked to clarify with specific examples, Mr. Smith identified, “some purchasing decisions and some things that have to do with athletics.” Mr. Smith’s

reason for his difficulty in ceding control was reminiscent of Mr. Hall's reasoning, identifying the principal's position in the organizational hierarchy, "Fortunately or unfortunately, principals are responsible for everything and everything lands on our shoulders." Like Ms. Grant, however, he recognized that, "I had to give up some of the power I had to make decisions so I could let my school business manager do his or her job."

School business managers also readily identified principals' reluctance to relinquish control as a source of tension in their initial efforts to forge their role in schools. While principals spoke of the challenge in terms of their personal ability to shift their roles, school business managers' language was more inclusive of the impact on both positions. Ms. Strong recognized the inherent difficulty principals had in redefining their role:

If you enjoy doing things, it is tough to give it up. And some of those things are a lot easier than what your job is. It is much easier to go down and line a field than it is to deal with a teacher and student who are having an issue or addressing a broader educational problem.

This echoes Ms. Grant's assertion:

I think there are principals out there that if you gave them a school manager, it wouldn't make a difference. They can't change to be an instructional leader because they are not instructionally sound. Their toolbox doesn't consist of instructional ideas or being able to manage instruction.

For Ms. Strong, regardless of the reason why principals had difficulty shifting their role, the impact on her efforts to enact her position were evident. While she brought extensive past experience in both education and business and noted that her training from the county was “very thorough,” Ms. Strong noted, “whenever you start with a new principal, there is an adjustment period.” This she attributed to the fact that, “I think the danger is that people are a little intimidated sometimes or are cautious because they think it (school business manager position) infringes on their authority but for the most part over time they realize that is not the case at all.”

Mr. Stevens also conveyed the challenge of enacting his role based on principal willingness to disperse authority. Speaking specifically of Mr. Hall, he described:

He was very much the stereotypical principal in that he enjoyed managing the building and so it was a transition when the school business manager program came aboard. . . it was initially difficult for certain principals and he was one of them, to relinquish some of the building based stuff they did for years.

According to Mr. Stevens, the result of this was that “You would be ready to do your job but you had to wait for your principal to be ready for you to be able to actually do it.” While Mr. Stevens noted that this was especially the case at the initiation of the school business manager position, he acknowledged that it was true to some extent when beginning work with any new principal. He has worked with four principals and with each one he suggests that there was an initial “learning curve.” He referenced the fact that he was just beginning his first year with Mr. Smith at Essex High School:

Despite my 10 years of experience and the reputation of my work in the county, I still need to figure out how he sees my role and how he expects us to work together. Just because I have done this job for years does not mean my role will be the same at Essex. In a broad sense, yes, but the specifics need to be worked out.

Mr. Stevens suggested that while the issue of ceding control was most pronounced when beginning to work with principals, it is evident to some extent throughout the working relationship. When asked to share a specific example, he explained:

Some principals, you know, when it comes to staff meetings and stuff like that when there are issues that need to be addressed, issues that pertain to my responsibility, a business manager could be the person to communicate that directly, and for me in my experience, most principals want to maintain that control of communication even though they may not be directly handling situations or issues or whatever the topic might be at the time. They want to be mouthpiece for it. Some principals like to maintain control and the appearance of authority even though it is something I have been responsible for doing and making the decisions about.

Mr. Stevens acknowledged that each principal he had worked with had different levels of comfort with empowering him as a school business manager: “It’s just something you have to figure out as a school manager. If you don’t, it makes it really hard to do your job well.”

Ms. Joan suggested that tensions did not emerge in her initial efforts as a school business manager. She attributed this to the fact that as secretary of Johnson, “I was already doing 90% of what they are requiring of the new school managers,” so “people were accustomed to coming to me for a lot of the things they would go to the school manager for.” In terms of her principal’s willingness to transfer authority to her, Ms. Joan stressed that, “Kim (Ms. Grant) and I already had a great working relationship and she already relied on me to do many of the things that were in the job description.” While Ms. Joan was the study participant least inclined to reference tensions based on principals’ willingness to cede control of aspects of the job to her as school business manager, she did concede that, “things are different with my current principal.” She was hesitant to offer specific details, but her reflection that it is “just a different style” suggests the second tension that emerged in the analysis of the data, competing leadership styles that developed between principals and school business managers.

Competing Leadership Styles

Organizations have specific roles individuals fill. These roles are usually associated with tasks and responsibilities outlined in job descriptions. How these roles are enacted is dependent not only on the specific context of the setting but also the leadership style of the individual. Leadership style is the manner or approach by which one provides direction and motivates others in an organization. Leadership style, specifically, incongruity between leadership styles of principals and school business managers emerged as a recurrent tension in the analysis of respondent data.

Mr. Stevens offered that as a school business manager, “You need to make sure you are in line with the common goals of the organization itself which obviously lends itself to being in line with your principal who is trying to establish him or herself.” Mr. Stevens noted that as a school business manager:

I guess it comes down to being the kind of person who takes the lead from the principal. There is a hierarchy and each of the principals I have worked with they certainly wanted to be the person who was in control and I didn’t have a problem with that. You have to take the lead from them, which was not necessarily my management style. . . . My management style, I tend to be a little more, not so much one specific type of person.

Ms. Strong conveyed an astuteness regarding the interpersonal dynamics in which she needed to maneuver as a school business manager, “The working relationships with each of those principals was very different and you adapt to the style of the principal and their expectations.” She elaborated noting:

You have to know your boss. Even if you don’t like the way that person manages, you still have to know them and what makes them tick and what is important to them and how you are going to best serve them.

Both Mr. Stevens and Ms. Strong conveyed an understanding that they needed to take cues from the leadership style of their principals rather than just acting in accordance to their own preferences.

Like the other two school business managers, Ms. Joan noted: “All three principals I worked with have a different style. You just have to figure that out so you can do your job.” While she recognized the variances, she explained: “I thought I have a very good working relationship with all of the principals. I can’t say I have any conflicts, true conflicts with any of the principals. Our styles seemed to work well together.”

Mr. Stevens offered an explanation of the how principal leadership styles impacted his role as a school manager, addressing specifically the two principals in this study with whom he worked:

To be successful as a principal you need to be fairly opinionated and I guess have a strong sense of direction of how you want to handle the school from a principal's position. I would say that was true of both of my principals, Mr. Hall and Mr. Smith. They have a lot of conviction in how they want to see things done. Both very much espouse a team approach, team-orientated approach to their management. They both seem to really feel strongly about the unity piece, even down to wearing staff shirts to show that. They both also seemed to be on the same level as regards their wanting everyone to fit their expectations, the principal's expectation. I can see where not recognizing that or not being able to work within that can limit what a school manager can accomplish.

When asked to elaborate on the concept of team and unity in his description, Mr. Stevens noted:

In terms of the principals I am referring to, I believe that they would define them as the same. Whether it was Mr. Hall at Westbrook or Mr. Smith at Essex, I think they would both see team as only being achieved through conformity.

Thus for Mr. Stevens, tensions had the potential to emerge, “when maybe I had a different idea of how something should be done or handled, something that didn’t fit with how the principal may have handled it.” In his estimation, both principals were more “authoritative” in their leadership approaches whereas he characterized his own leadership preference as more “collaborative.”

As regards Mr. Hall specifically, Ms. Strong noted “his rigid interpretation of how he managed and how others were expected to interact in that structure” were reasons for her decision to transfer to a new school. She did not elaborate further, but Mr. Stevens insights suggest: “. . . working with Mr. Hall that was often tricky at times. He didn’t always do things by the book; I mean he didn’t. It was just this, I think he enjoyed bucking the system.” According to Mr. Stevens: “One of a school manager’s main responsibilities is to see that policy is implemented. Mr. Hall’s style was often to do the opposite. It could make for tricky situations with him.”

Mr. Hall frequently referenced the tensions that emerged between him and Ms. Strong related to the insights Mr. Stevens had about his leadership style. Specifically, Mr. Hall’s comments suggest how contrasting leadership styles regarding adherence to policy and procedure in decision-making was manifested overtly in the tensions that emerged in his partnership with Ms. Strong. Mr. Hall suggested that with Ms. Strong:

There was a lack of a working relationship beyond the nuts and bolts of what was in the school district policy in working with the staff, the families, the community. Everything was done by the book and there was no variance to the policy.

This he noted as especially problematic “anytime we wanted to veer away from the Lewis County procedures. She was very adamant on not doing that and doing everything by the book. So she and I did not have a good relationship in that respect.” Thus, according to Mr. Hall, Ms. Strong’s leadership orientation towards strict adherence to policy was not aligned with his own leadership perspective. Mr. Hall drew a sharp contrast between the styles exhibited by Mr. Stevens and Ms. Strong and the impact on his ability to work effectively with them:

I felt that Ken’s leadership style aligned much more closely with mine as opposed to Grace. Grace was more by the book authoritarian and Ken, I thought if you put him on the continuum from authoritarian with laissez faire with democratic in the middle, Ken would be somewhere in the middle of them and I definitely fall in that area myself as well. So Ken aligned better with me. Grace wanted to do everything by the book continually. This created significant problems in our relationship whereas Ken and I did not have any.

While Mr. Steven recognized the need to modify his leadership style to accommodate what he perceived to be Mr. Hall’s more authoritative style, Mr. Hall himself suggested that his own leadership orientation was more akin to collaboration. His assessment of his leadership style led him to believe that “Our similarities in

leadership style helped me collaborate better with Ken because he was more open to collaboration. With Grace everything was by the book.”

Ms. Strong’s reflections also suggested her assessment of the principals with whom she worked and their individual leadership styles. This was most acutely reflected in her reference to the contrast between the leadership style of Ms. Grant and the two male principals with whom she worked. Ms. Strong explained:

Her (Ms. Grant’s) management style is one that I think she quickly assesses the abilities of personnel and does not hesitate to rely on people that she believes have the knowledge and skills to assist. I think the nature of her management style lent itself to us working well together very quickly and the fact that my experience level had a knowledge base that she needed to be able to manage most effectively made us a strong team.

Unlike “team,” which Mr. Stevens associated with complying with Mr. Hall and Mr. Smith’s direction, Ms. Strong’s use of the term in reference to Ms. Grant reflected greater collaboration and opportunities to influence a broader decision-making arena:

No matter what the issue she (Kim Grant) believed that I had some information or some evaluation of a situation that would lend itself to her being better informed and making a more informed decision. She would not have hesitated to ask for that advice and our relationship was such that she would confide in me because I believe she was very comfortable that she could have that kind of discussion and it

remained private and professional. With Mr. Hall that would not have existed at all and with Mr. Smith it would only have taken place with somebody directly in my reporting structure.

Ms. Strong's distinction among the receptiveness of her principals was underscored by Ms. Grant's description of her own acceptance of diverse views, a stark contrast to the Ms. Strong's male principals, who according to her were more prone to assert their authority as principals in the decision-making relationship:

I think as a leader, I think you always want to surround yourself with people who will compensate for your weaknesses. It is always good to have people around who can pick up on things you might miss because of your own style. While with Grace and I having different styles when it comes to dealing with people and Joan and I having different styles in terms of organization, I think it has actually helped us collaborate more. We can look at things from a different perspective and offer different ideas. It helped that we acknowledged that we had differences and we were okay with that. Some people might see that as a conflict, but I never did. We might have different ideas, but in the end it made the decisions that were ultimately made stronger. I think especially with Grace. At the high school, there are so many things that are different from the elementary. I always appreciated her way at looking at issues and that is why I often asked her for feedback on issues. When she knew that something should be done she was going to say something and I think that was good for me. Because I don't

want somebody who is just going to do everything I say. I want them sometimes to challenge me too to be thinking differently whether it is from a different perspective or whether its things I hadn't thought of when it comes to the implications of putting something in place.

Ms. Grant did concur with Mr. Hall in assessing Ms. Strong's leadership style but suggested that rather than creating tensions, it was a strength:

Grace's style was more this is my job, these are my responsibilities, this is what I believe, we are going to follow the rules. I am not one to pat you on the back but this is the way it's going to be. They (staff) do kinda like that and they respected her for that.

Like the other two principals, Mr. Smith suggested the importance of "learning each others styles" when working with a school business manager. He offered:

The role of the school manager is an absolute wonderful role and if you find somebody that shares the visions and belief and operating system that you have and buys into your, if you guys have similar styles and similar philosophies, then it is a wonderful relationship. If you have a conflict or a person with different views, then it makes that relationship a little bit more difficult.

In reflecting on his three school business managers, he drew a contrast in their management styles:

Joan was more of a personable leader. She played, she operated from the realm of keeping people satisfied and keeping people happy as best she could within the job parameters. . . . She was also a very

supportive person of personnel so she helped to kinda mold the whole building's overall atmosphere and tone and morale.

This he believed led to a “really good working relationship.” In contrast, he noted:

Grace would just get things done. She was a, the bottom line, get the job done, move on. So, in terms of her management style, she knew what she needed to do and she got the job done. She was very accurate in what she did and she did things by the book. Sometimes this made it a little more difficult to work collaboratively, you know, when you need to make decisions that maybe are outside what the district would say you have to do.

For Mr. Smith, the incongruity between his leadership style and Ms. Strong's was more evident when contrasted with his working relationship with Mr. Stevens:

Ken is a team player and he is willing to do anything to help our team succeed. He is very mild mannered and soft-spoken which I think is appreciated by a predominately female staff. I know I appreciate that he listens and is willing to do what is best for the team and not just what policy says.

Overall, Mr. Smith summarized the crux of the tension that emerged when leadership styles or ideologies differ between school business manager and principal: “So I mean, as long as you demonstrate that you have the same philosophy as the principal it seems to be pretty good working relationship. If you don't, it can be a difficult situation.”

Trust

Another significant tension that emerged from the data from both principals and school business managers was the establishing of trust between the two parties. Trust is characterized by the confidence one has in another and involves a degree of sacrificing control and placing that power in the hands of another. A lack of trust can foster individual's unwillingness to engage collaboratively. Trust is thus essential in a shared model of leadership. As Ms. Joan noted, "the most important thing that allowed me to do my job as a school manager was that my principals trusted me." However, as Mr. Stevens suggested, trust was not something inherent from the start of the working relationship with principals. Instead, "it is a building process." In the intervening time in which it took to establish that relationship, both school business managers and principals identified that issues involving their ability to trust the other impacted the implementation of the school business manager role. However, all three school managers concurred that once trust was evident, it had a positive impact on the authority for decision making that they perceived in their role.

Ms. Grant focused on the concept of trust in language that was similar to how school business managers presented their views. For her and the school business managers in the study, trust manifested itself in the degree to which principals would support school business managers' decision-making authority. Ms. Grant explained:

School business managers need to know you trust them. They are making decision that impact how our school runs. In order to do that, they need to know that I believe they have the knowledge and skills to do that. But I think it is even more important that they trust that I will

support them in their decision-making. Now sometimes they may not always do things the way I might have, but that's where it is important to have built that relationship with them so that you know there is a good rationale behind what they did. If you are always second guessing their decisions, you aren't conveying that you trust them or that they have the authority. That can create significant problems, not just between you and them but with teachers as well.

She noted that in reflecting on her early interactions with the school business manager concept, the issue of trust impacted her ability to relinquish her control of authority, "In hindsight, I realize that part of my initial problems with the school business manager was my inability to trust that the work I used to do would get done by someone else."

Ms. Strong provided a similar reflection on the importance of trust in the principal school business manager relationship:

But to impact and have a value that transcends just the mechanics of the job, you have to have that working relationship with the principal that demonstrates to the staff that the position is valued, that you (the principal) are going to support the decisions that person makes, and that you trust their judgment.

She was emphatic that trust characterized her working relationship with Ms. Grant, "We had a trusting relationship and I think that was key."

Ms. Joan also noted the high level of trust that she had with Ms. Grant, "She had trouble with the first guy (school business manager) and I think one of the reason she

wanted me for that position was because she already trusted me and knew the work I was doing for her and the school.” She explained that although she was not considered for the position in the first hiring phase because “I do not have a four-year degree so that was a drawback and I was not eligible to be interviewed for the position, . . . Kim strongly suggested that I apply.” According to Ms. Joan, the trust between them was exemplified by the fact that, “She (Ms. Grant) included me in all decision-making in the school. She was always looking for my opinion and really took my opinions into consideration.”

For Ms. Strong, trust “is a combination of how the principal supports that person in the relationship they demonstrate in relying on that person in addition to you (the school business manager) being competent in your job.” In her estimation, the most important aspect for her to establish trust was “You got to be loyal; it is key.”

Mr. Hall correlated the terms trust and loyalty. However, unlike the other participants in the study, he was adamant that it was not something developed as part of the relationship but rather “The one thing that I demanded of my school manager was loyalty.” He elaborated on this by defining loyalty specifically:

They serve me and the school first and that they serve the district second. And this is where I had some issues with a couple, with basically two of the school managers of the four I worked with. They were very concerned, that you know, that since that they were reporting also to the assistant superintendent of administrative services that their loyalty was to the district, but you know, again, my vision of the school manager was that they are part of the administrative team of

the school and that they were responsible first and foremost to the school, to the students, staff and community of the school.

Mr. Hall was the only participant in the study who had the understanding that the school business manager was by design "under the direct control of the assistant superintendent for administrative services." He was adamant as reflected in the emphasis he gave this point:

What I didn't need as part of my administrative team was somebody who was a main line back to the district. Not to say that we were necessarily in violation of district policies, but perhaps from time to time we had to come up with viable ways of, I guess the best way of saying it is, massaging policies so that they best benefitted the unique culture and the community we serve of Westbrook.

Mr. Hall specifically associated this tension with Ms. Strong. In contrast, he offered Ken Steven as an effective school manager, one whom he deemed "loyal to me and the school." This loyalty he associated with the fact that, "Ken knew my direction for the school and knew that my direction was the factor to inform his decision-making." In Mr. Hall's estimation, this led to "a very close working relationship with Mr. Stevens as well as the feeling of loyalty to the school and to the community more so than to the district or to the district personnel." For his part, Mr. Stevens noted: "Initially, no I would not say we (he and Mr. Hall) had a trusting working relationship. It took time but it did end up being more collaborative as we worked together."

Like Mr. Hall, Mr. Smith referenced issues of trust specific with Ms. Strong, situating tensions relative to trust in the fact that she was already well-established in her position as school business manager when he arrived as a new principal at Essex High School. This created a tension in which there was a differential in their knowledge base and a situation where he was reliant on her for information.

Mr. Smith described:

We had a bit of a rocky start and I guess there were some things that were said outside of me and her by other people in the organization and she wasn't sure if she actually wanted to continue to work with me and if she would take the path of least resistance or whatever. But my feeling coming in was that I needed Grace because she knew the building, she knew the operations, she knew every nuance of the situation, finances, everything. In my opinion she was very valuable to the building, to Essex High School, to the students, and to me in making that transition. So we were able to, we sat down and we talked and kinda ironed out what the here say was and none of it was true. It's just when you get through transitions like that or you get changes like that, people like to talk. So it was more about making an agreement that we need to get through this together and letting her know that I needed her in order for me to be successful and I that I relied heavily on her in terms of getting timeframes done and ever nuance that goes on in a high school, let alone graduation.

According to him:

Grace was very confident in her job. She had been doing this job for several years where I just came into this position as a new high school principal. She knew what she needed to do and she did it. She often would be supportive of me in this role and provide information and timelines that the former or previous principal used. I think the support Grace had from the staff at Essex was because of her longevity here.

For her part, Ms. Strong also acknowledged the tensions:

I think it took longer to develop a trusting relationship with him. You have to have that trust for your boss to rely on you to the full extent. That developed over a period of time. As he became more comfortable with my strengths and where it could impact specific aspects of responsibilities as well as reduce his workload that collaboration improved.

She reiterated this again in our interview, providing greater insight into the tension that emerged around the issue of trust:

I think initially it again took a while to develop that trust. I think there is a difference in perception in the school manager position with Mr. Smith as opposed to Mrs. Grant. So, while I think I was perceived as an equal member of the team under Mrs. Grant, I don't think it probably was as perceived by the administrative team as that strong of a role. However, it didn't change with the staff because I had been there for a number of years and had cemented that relationship.

However, I think probably two thirds of the way through the year, that relationship, I think he was more comfortable with my style and was more likely to utilize input and my skills then initially.

She maintained, “I am extremely loyal and once that is recognized, you get beyond the egos.”

Mr. Stevens did not directly reference issues of trust in discussing his interactions with Mr. Smith. However, the concept did emerge in his references to associating similarities between working with Mr. Hall and Mr. Smith:

With, Mr. Hall, considering he went through three school managers before me, in a short amount of time, it was a little bit of survival.

Actually, it surprisingly, is consistent between the two principals, Mr.

Hall and Mr. Smith. They are very much team orientated people; they want conformity, if that is the right word. I mean that in a positive way. They are looking to have a similar, singular team approach.

Everybody be on the same page and they were looking for the ability to trust and confide in their coworker.

Principal Strategies

Principals and school business managers identified tensions that emerged as they forged their roles in schools including principals’ willingness to cede control, differences in leadership styles, and establishing trust. While there was consistency in the tensions identified by participants, the strategies employed by principals and school business managers emerged from the data to be contingent upon the role of the

actor in the organizational setting. For principals, strategies reflected their authoritative position whereas school business managers seemed more prone to adopting strategies related to relationship building and influence.

Organizational Charts

All three principals referenced their creation of school specific organizational charts as an initial strategy for implementing the school business manager position in their respective schools. These charts were intended to delineate the specific spheres of control and task responsibilities of the administrative staff to include the addition of the school business manager role. It is important to note that in each case, principals assumed control of creating and sharing the charts with staff.

According to Mr. Hall:

One of the first things I did was create a chart of who had what responsibilities as far as tasks in the school. There was a job description of course for the county but it didn't really translate well for staff to understand what issues the school business managers should be handling in my building and what the assistant principal would be managing.

Mr. Hall's use of the phrase "my building" suggests his effort to denote specifically the areas of responsibility he was authorizing as regards the school business manager role. He added:

I made sure that this was something I reviewed with staff at the start of the school year so there were not any questions about who had responsibility for what aspects of the running of the school. I think it

was important that staff knew that I was still responsible for all aspects but that I was designating the others on my team to be the first line of contact for issues. It was also important for the school business managers because they would know what issues they should be communicating back to me.

A review of Mr. Hall's matrix suggests that while his description suggested a hierarchical underpinning for the creation of the chart, the layout and content did not present this as directly. Designed as a three-column chart, the only evidence of subordination of the assistant principal and school business manager was that the principal duties were listed in the first column. As regards duties, those listed under the school business manager were reflective of the county matrix, including responsibility for maintenance issues, attendance, transportation, and fundraising. It also included areas of overlap between principal tasks and the school business manager. For example, graduation was listed under both. Mr. Hall explained that the chart was meant to define general tasks that "I clarified more specifically in meeting with staff." He elaborated on the graduation component by sharing,

Obviously, as principal, I was responsible for graduation ceremonies and all that went into that but the school business manager would be responsible for the logistics, like setting up the physical space, arranging the sound system and stage, things like that.

Like Mr. Hall, Ms. Grant described a similar effort to clearly demarcate the responsibilities of school staff:

I always did a matrix of, here are the responsibilities of Grace, here are the responsibilities of Kim, here are the responsibilities of Amy (assistant principal). When I was at Johnson, I did the same thing. Here is what Joan is going to handle. . . . Well, there's things you need to redirect people to the school manager. So I think when you lay it out where people know, I think people do respect the idea that you are giving them someone to go to, to get it done quickly. . . . So I think that making the job description clear and communicating it but also showing the staff that you are relinquishing some of these decisions to this person, I think is real important for establishing the authority the school business manager has. I think it was also helpful for reminding me, especially at first, so that I was not so inclined to micromanage everything. It was to remind me that I had to let go of some control.

While subtle, the distinction between Mr. Hall's and Ms. Grant's creation of the organizational charts is that his description suggests its use more for maintaining his authority and Ms. Grant more so the "relinquishing" of control. Mr. Hall's effort confirmed his control while Ms. Grant described her effort to be to signal the authority of the school business manager.

Mr. Smith also referenced the use of an organizational chart. He noted that, "There was a specific list of job responsibilities in place from the former principal when I came to Johnson and again when I went to Essex." This he described as "helpful" in developing his understanding of the scope of the school business

manager job. The charts in place served as a “starting point for me but naturally things changed a little as I became more familiar with the role and how I could use the position.” A review of Mr. Smith’s organizational chart for Essex High School reflected a column layout similar to Mr. Hall’s. However, the school business manager responsibilities occupied the first column followed by each of his three assistant principals and then his being the last one. When asked about this layout he explained that it “summarizes how I see the school business manager relationship with the administrative staff. He is one end of it with the facilities and logistics of day-to-day management and I am the instructional end.” Duties outlined were consistent with the county outline. Mr. Smith noted that the chart gave “people an idea of who was responsible for what.”

School business managers substantiated the organizational charts but associated them more with the initial stages of their work with principals rather than a continually reoccurring element in their tenure in positions. Ms. Joan shared her recollection that with Ms. Grant:

We sat down and we actually had a sheet that she handed out in our staff handbook to staff to say that these would be responsibilities I would be covering, her responsibilities and assistant principal responsibilities. So that is how we broke down, broke down the job duties like that so that way staff would know who they should go to for what.

Her use of the pronoun “we” substantiates the empowering use of the chart for establishing her authority with Ms. Grant as principal. In contrast, Ms. Joan shared:

“There is nothing like that in place with my current principal. I just do what has always been my job. He hasn’t really been specific about what he wants me to do.”

Mr. Stevens recalled “there being one (organizational chart)” with Mr. Hall that he would share with staff but not with Mr. Smith. “Now there might be one but it is not something that we reviewed.” The difference he implied is that the school business manager position is well entrenched in Lewis County Public Schools and thus there is less need now than when it was initially implemented to define the role for staff.

Administrative Team

Another principal strategy that emerged in the data was the use of the administrative team as a construct for negotiating tensions. The strategy emerged in how principals used this construct to limit or expand school business managers’ access to the decision-making arena at the school site. In Lewis County Public Schools the school leadership team is defined as the decision making entity for the school and is comprised of principal, assistant principals, and school business manager. Without specific oversight from the district to monitor the work of this team, however, principals in Lewis County appeared to have a great deal of autonomy in how they implemented the expectation for this group.

Mr. Hall described how he employed his administrative team:

One of the things that I always did was that we had weekly administrative meetings with a stable agenda so that so that both myself and the assistant principal, as well as, the school manager were up to date on what was happening both instructionally and from the

management point of view. So, there was open communication and dialogue on the administrative team and even though there were only three of us there were still many situations that required us to brief one another on what was going on what was happening in the school.

According to him:

I tried to be as open as I could in meeting with my school leadership team, allowing their viewpoints to be part of the decision making process. I would hope to say that it was somewhat of collaborate decision making process but with the final decision having to rest in the chair of the principal.

He further explained, “ My feeling is that the school manager has to be an integral part of the school administrative team and not just a byproduct of the team or somebody who is just on the sidelines.” The problem he encountered, however, was reiterated in the problems he had with the reporting structure of the school business manager:

I think first and foremost as being part of the administrative team the school manager needs to report directly to the school principal and not be put in the situation where they are serving two superiors, one being the school principal and the other being the assistant superintendent for administrative services.

He associated this problem directed with Ms. Strong but never referenced it in terms of Mr. Stevens.

Ms. Strong shared Mr. Hall’s understanding of who comprised the administrative team, “The leadership team I would describe as the principal, assistant principal,

school manager and depending on the principal, guidance.” In her assessment, “I think I was always considered part of that team; it’s just depending on the principal you work with you were more equal than other times.” She noted specifically:

With Mr. Hall, it was more of a directive. Here is what we are going to do. Within pretty broad parameters, I would do my job. Mr. Hall was a more structured, more directive in how meetings should be run.

Mr. Stevens substantiated her perception suggesting:

I was always part of the team in the sense of being at the meetings. But at first, I didn’t really feel like I was expected to contribute ideas. It was pretty clear to me from the agendas Mr. Hall would send that there were specific things that he wanted me to report.

He did note: “Now this changed over time. There was always an agenda with topics he included, but it really did become more collaborative with him but it took a lot of time.” When asked to elaborate in the change in the meeting structure, Mr. Stevens noted that Mr. Hall began to ask him for items to include on the agenda prior to the meetings and ultimately opened up the meetings for him to share topics as needed regardless of whether or not they were on the agenda. He added, “I also think as I established myself more with Mr. Hall I was able to start expressing ideas more.”

Meeting agendas from administrative team meetings under Mr. Hall’s tenure were available for review. Each began with a principal report followed by the assistant principal and school business manger. Agenda items remained fairly consistent with a correlation to broad areas in each person’s job matrix. For example, the assistant principal always reported on discipline while the school manager reported on

attendance and fundraising. There was no evidence of norms for the meeting or efforts to facilitate a collaborative culture for the meetings. Instead, the documents substantiate Mr. Hall's structuring of the agenda, time, and areas for individual participation.

Mr. Smith was the least descriptive of his use of the administrative team process. He did offer:

They (the school business manager) are a part of our administration team and we all meet as an administrative team and we present ourselves as our administration team. In all three people, in all three situations it is, I have had the opportunity to have more than just myself and the business manager, we have had assistant principals because of the size of the building. They are as equal as we all are. It takes all of us to do it.

The school business managers in the study, however, suggest that the use of the administrative team construct was a strategy he employed deliberately. In particular, Ms. Strong noted a distinct difference in Mr. Smith's meetings: "With Doug, there was a daily meeting. I would report first of the group and then I would leave. So I would not stay for the entire meeting." Mr. Stevens noted a similar pattern: "I do not attend all of the meetings. Doug sometimes meets with just the assistant principals, but lately he has been asking me to sit in on more of them." Ms. Joan noted that she was included in all of the administrative team meetings with Mr. Smith, "I always had been involved in the meetings when Kim was principal so I just kept going when Doug started." This she contrasted to her current administration:

We do not have regular meetings and we just kind of talk in passing. The principal now just meets with the assistant principals. I don't need to be involved in everything but most of the time I don't know curriculum wise what's going on. I have no idea. That's hard sometimes because there is sometimes overlap.

Ms. Joan was specific in contrasting this with Ms. Grant:

When we would meet, we would talk about not only things that pertain to school manager duties, but we would talk about the school as a whole. What was coming up, what we were doing, even curriculum things so I knew when things were going on. I felt a part of the team.

Ms. Strong also singled Ms. Grant as having a collaborative approach to the leadership team:

Kim had the most back and forth in terms of sharing ideas in our meetings. We would have weekly meeting probably about a half hour on Mondays and review the upcoming week and any particular topics that were priorities we would have a general discussion on, any concerns. I would stay for that entire meeting. So that was a significant difference in style from meetings with Mr. Smith.

Ms. Grant described her process for administrative team meetings:

When we had those meetings they (the school business managers) are talking to me about decisions they are making or situations they are dealing with and I am talking to them about issues. It really has to be this way if we are going to be successful. It needs to be all of us

engaging in a conversation from multiple perspectives so we can make the best decisions for our organization.

While all principals noted their implementation of an administrative team, how they structured that impacted school business managers' access and participation in the decision-making arena.

Communication

All three principals in the study referenced the importance of communication as a strategy for navigating the initial tensions that emerged with the addition of the school business manager position. In reference to Mr. Stevens specifically Mr. Hall noted:

We simply communicated on a regular basis. Mr. Stevens would come to me, looking for some direction as necessary. We would sit down and we would talk about it but he understood that, you know, I would still make the final decision.

For Mr. Hall communication involved school business managers seeking his guidance on how to carry out their responsibilities. This he explained was important because: "They need to be acting on my behalf, making sure that their work supports my direction. The only way for this to happen is for them to communicate to me regularly." Communication as described by Mr. Hall was a means for him to monitor school business managers' actions and thus maintain a level of authority over their work. The contrast he drew between communication with Mr. Stevens and Ms. Strong illustrated this point:

Grace would not communicate with me. Instead she would go to the assistant superintendent for direction. Ken would always come to me to talk about what he was going to do. This was one of the reasons we had a better working relationship.

His perception of the direction of Ms. Strong's communication added rather than abated tensions whereas Mr. Stevens' proclivity for initiating dialogue with him eased potential tensions.

Mr. Smith also referenced the importance of communication as a strategy for negotiating tensions. His references to communication, however, suggested implementing it for different purposes as he worked with different school business managers in different contexts. In his first experience with a school manager, he suggested that communication was essential for assisting him in defining the role of the school business manager and thus his own role as principal: "So I have to say that Joan and I were able to establish a good working relationship through frequent communication and it was me double checking with, that's yours, right? That's not mine, those types of conversations." With Ms. Strong, his second school business manager, he noted that because she was already well established in her role and Essex represented his first experience as a secondary principal: "I relied on her communication to me. Timelines, how things work." Her communication to him provided needed information for him to fulfill his role. With Mr. Stevens, however:

We had the conversation that I know you are new and I know that you have done things a different way before. You are not new to the job, but new to this size, this position in particular, and we are new to

working with each other. So our first year together is going to involve lots of communication.

In his language regarding his communication with Mr. Stevens, especially the word “conversation,” there is a suggestion of focus on relationship building rather than just exchange of information. Despite this reference to a more two-way dialogue with Mr. Stevens, Mr. Smith shared that communication was primarily a way for him to convey his expectations to school business managers for how they would engage in their responsibilities:

It’s really important for me to clearly share my direction for the school and for school business managers at the start of our work together.

This is really the only way to make sure the school business manager knows how act to support my vision for the school.

In this regard, communication served Mr. Smith as a strategy for asserting his authority.

Ms. Grant referenced communication frequently. Like the other two principals, she noted the importance of it at the initial stages of the program or when there were changes in personnel in the roles:

Communication is the most important thing, especially when we started the program. That’s when I needed to be communicating with my school manager to try to figure out what we were doing. And that happens again when people in the positions change, whether it be me moving to a new school or a new school manager starting.

Ms. Grant, however, suggested an additional component to the importance of communication:

I think first of all communication is important for understanding each school manager's strengths and weaknesses. I think it was real important to sit down with them before the school year starts and really get to know where do they feel comfortable in this role. And really looking at the job description but being realistic that we are going to be going off this job description but there may be other things that they might be able to take on. When I was talking with each of them, I think it is real important to find out where they feel comfortable and where they don't feel comfortable. And then I think its important to put them in situations, in situations, where they feel really comfortable with something, having them lead that discussion in maybe a collaborative manner so that they are building even more confidence and then sharing their strengths. And then I think in the areas where they weren't as comfortable with, making sure that you are providing the needed expertise yourself or that you are teaming them up with someone that has the expertise and supporting them in getting that expertise. I think that relation is really important and I think what that means you need to take the time to get to know that person, not only their personal traits, but also their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to some of the job details. I think it is really important sometimes I found one of the ways to build the

relationship is when I talk with my school manager sometimes we talk things out loud, so that we are building that relationship where we are making sometimes decisions together. There are some times when I have told her, I respect your opinion but this is what we are going to do. And then there were other times where she changed my mind because she gave me a different perspective whichever person that might be.

Both Ms. Joan and Ms. Strong offered that of the principals with whom they worked, Ms. Grant was the one who engaged them in communication to the greatest extent. As Ms. Strong described, “With Kim it was pretty much a daily process of communicating on items that were important to talk about throughout the day.” Ms. Joan explained: “Ms. Grant didn’t just tell you what to do; she wanted to know what you were thinking. I always felt like it was a shared conversation.” Both Ms. Joan and Ms. Strong noted that Ms. Grant’s communication style lent itself to fostering a productive working relationship.

School Business Manager Strategies

School business managers also employed strategies to navigate the tensions that emerged as they forged their roles in schools. Like principals, there were consistent themes that emerged in their efforts with principals. Like principals, school business managers referenced the importance of communication but also identified conforming, and assuming additional work tasks as important strategies.

Listening

Analysis of school business managers interview data referenced communication frequently. For school business managers, communication included two components, both them sharing information with principals and them being recipients of information as listeners. In both forms, communication from the perspective of school business managers served as a means to build collegial relationships with principals to improve their efficacy in the position.

According to Mr. Stevens:

Communication has been really important any time I have started to work with a new principal. Every principal I have worked for had different expectations and the best way to figure that out so I could do my job was to communicate. It's really important to listen. You find out a great deal by listening.

Both Mr. Hall and Mr. Smith substantiated Mr. Stevens' proclivity for listening. Mr. Smith referenced this noting:

I believe that he demonstrates to staff and to myself that he is a genuine listener. I believe that when people are dealing with him, they get the feeling, that you know what, this guy is really listening. I know I always get the sense that when I am talking with him he is hearing me and understanding my perspective on how we should operate.

Mr. Smith also noted:

Ken isn't afraid to ask questions and that's important when you start working together. It helps him to understand the direction we are going in as a school and how things are done here. I think this has contributed to his effectiveness here.

Mr. Hall also identified this as a strength for Mr. Stevens, "He was good at listening." While he did not directly attribute this to his interactions with him, he did note:

Ken . . . had an open door policy for teachers to visit with Ken to discuss concerns and to look for resolutions to their concerns. He was always willing to listen before making his decisions. This was valued by staff.

Mr. Steven shared that with both his principals in this study:

There was no real formal communication on like, do you have this and I got that. It was more of a discussion of issues that needed to be completed and what roles each of us would play in that. They were both also clear on what the expectations were, of how they wanted things to run in their schools.

While this provided initial guidance, Mr. Stevens noted:

It's my style to communicate what I am doing with the principal, especially at the start of our work together. I have found that keeping the principal informed helps establish my credibility both in terms of my ability to do the job but also to do the job in a way that reflects the

principal's direction. I think it's important to principals to know I am really working for and with them.

This, he suggested:

helps prevent conflicts. I mean, there are lots of different ways to accomplish the goal and that is basically what it comes down to. My standard approach is to be able to listen carefully and then when I have established myself to discuss the issues and point of view. . . I think principals appreciate knowing that I have heard them and that my work is informed by their direction. You have to listen in order to accomplish that.

Like Mr. Stevens, communication emerged as an important strategy in Ms. Joan's efforts to negotiate her role as a school business manager, "Being able to talk with my principals helps me be more effective in my job." According to her, "If I am not sharing what is going on in my part and they aren't sharing from their perspective then its like we aren't really working together." In contrast to Mr. Stevens, Ms. Joan's method of communication was less contingent upon listening first to establish herself than openness to sharing from the start of the relationship. Ms. Grant referenced Ms. Joan's communication as a component of her overall personality:

Joan is the people person. Joan's the kind of person who likes to . . . she's a talker. She is definitely a verbal person. Our relationship was all about communication. She was the kind where she wanted . . . She just always wanted to talk about anything with work, or at home, or

personal. This was her way of building a relationship. She was just always open about everything.

From Ms. Joan's perspective:

I have just always thought it's important to be able to communicate with the principal. With Kim, we already had that relationship where we could talk to each other about anything. That was one of the things that made it work from the start. I could always tell her what I was thinking and share what I was doing and she did the same. It was the same with Doug.

Mr. Smith also noted Ms. Joan's penchant for communication: "She didn't shy away from sharing what she was thinking. It was just part of her personality. But her communication was always positive in nature, 'What can I do to help' type instead of making situations more difficult."

All three principals drew a sharp contrast between Ms. Strong and the other two school business managers in the study as regards communication, especially in terms of her affinity for listening. Mr. Smith described:

Grace was more, was more of the strong silent type. Grace would listen, but she was a little bit quicker on the decision. She didn't have time for the fluffy stuff. She would just get things done. She was a, the bottom line, get the job done; move on.

Ms. Grant concurred with his assessment noting, "Grace was definitely more of a business person as far as small talk, this is the job, I know what I need to do, let me do my job, and not a lot of small talk." Mr. Hall offered, " Grace simply would state

that ‘Well this is the way it is and this is how we are going to do it and that’s it. There was really no conversation.’ From her own perspective, Ms. Strong did suggest that she was willing to listen to others but that this was tempered by a strong allegiance to her maintaining the boundaries of policy that guided her work:

I think if you are consistent and fair and you earn people’s respect, you are going to be effective. I am always going to listen and try to understand their perspective, and if there is something that can be modified and still stay within the guidelines, then that should be considered.

Ms. Strong did suggest that communication was an essential strategy in navigating her role in schools but she acknowledged that her efforts were informed by her understanding of the principals with whom she worked:

I think principals have their priorities and sometimes may interpret things differently than you do. So my fallback was always to communicate but I think it is all in how you present something to people and with each principal it is different. Some are more receptive than others to hearing divergent opinions. It’s important to know this about your principal.

Ms. Strong suggested that she could be the most direct with Ms. Grant and that communication in their work together was “frequent dialogue and sharing” as opposed to the more directive communication with her two other principals: “In those cases, there was less invitation from them to me to contribute to a conversation. There was a greater expectation that I listen.”

Conformity and Diplomacy

While not a strategy directly named in school business managers' discussion of their actions within schools, conformity did emerge in specific contexts of their work. Most notably, conformity was evident when school business managers shared efforts to forge new relationships with principals. Although Mr. Mills noted: " One of the things we tried to do in our trainings was to tell folks [school business managers] we don't pay you to say yes. We pay you to give your principal your best advice." He conceded that ultimately, " If the principal says 'no,' we expect you to go out there and do what the principal says. That is the hierarchical part of what business function is all about." While Mr. Mills referenced this as an aspect of the structural nature of the organization, Blasé and Anderson (1995) identify the deliberate effort to, "be consistent with the informal expectations of the principal" as an application of conformity.

Of the school business managers in the study, Mr. Stevens was most direct in his articulation of the use of conformity as a strategy in his initial interactions with principals. He suggested: "In working with any principal, as long as you align with what their expectation is you can't really go too far wrong. You can't go too far wrong as long as you are maintaining the standard that is set." This he accomplished through understanding that, "the best way to kind of establish yourself is to allow principals to kind of determine the least resistance." From Mr. Stevens' perspective: "It is important that the principal know that you are going to follow his direction. Once you have established yourself this way, there are more opportunities to try to

share different opinions.” He noted that there were numerous examples in which he differed in an opinion on a course of action from that of his principal. In those cases, he explained:

For me, honesty is the best policy. I have never shied away from being honest with principals that I was working for. And I think if you are genuine and you approach it in a respectful way I don’t think anybody, I have never met anyone who had any problem with an issue that may be raised. Now, of course there is always going to be difference of opinion and those are conflict that you have to work out, but the best thing I have found to deal with it is just to give your opinion and state the reason why and it is really truly up to the principal to make the determination.

In this example, Mr. Stevens suggests his use of diplomacy, presenting a logical argument in professional manner but ultimately his understanding of the need to conform to the principal’s preference.

Mr. Stevens did concede, “It’s not always easy to put aside your own ideas and do what someone else wants, but that’s part of the job sometimes.” He continued, “It does take a certain demeanor to be non-confrontational, especially when you feel strongly about an issue.” In his perspective, however, establishing himself as a “team player” ultimately facilitated greater trust from his principals, which in turn allowed him more access to the decision-making arenas in the school setting and ultimately greater autonomy in his efforts within the organization.

Mr. Mills provided insight regarding of Mr. Stevens' effective use of conformity and diplomacy to negotiate potentially confrontational issues:

When he heard from you that you have to do it this way, he would say, 'Jim that may not work because . . . ,' so he was not overly deferential in the sense that he would just say, 'Okay I will do it.' He would present his side or his opinion but he would do it very calmly, very laid back and so he often got what he wanted not in an in-your-face kind of way.

Conformity also emerged as a strategy in the analysis of Ms. Strong's interview data. She noted specifically that she would employ this strategy to preserve her own credibility in the decision-making process. According to Ms. Strong, there are situations in which school business managers need to:

make a decision on whether you are going to implement something based on whether you can control it or whether you are going to have the support from your principal. Occasionally that type of situation may occur, one in which my interpretation might be different than that of my principal. In that case, I was more inclined to defer to the principal's decision on that rather than draw a line in the sand.

Ms. Strong's explanation of conformity in this case is not only a strategy for aligning with her principal, but also a maneuver to preserve her own authority.

The following excerpt from her interview transcript provides an additional example of her use of conformity as well as her astuteness in diplomacy, in this case

aligned with the building relationship aspect also noted by Mr. Stevens in his use of the strategies:

In order to enforce policies effectively, you have to have a relationship with your principal that gets that done. Sometimes there is going to be a conflict so you have to manage that. I think principals have their priorities and sometimes may interpret things differently than you do. So my fallback was always, the conflicts were different. . . , but I think it is all in how you present something to people and each principal is different, each style is different but I think you have to determine as a school manager, and working in any relationship with your boss, what are the aspects that are going to make it a difference to them in the decision making process. In a particular situation, I outlined the possible, the potential consequences as opposed to 'policy says this'. . . you just get to know each individual that you are working with and again based on a sound reasoning for your opposition to whatever it is or you are advocating for a particular position. In that particular situation, I outlined the possible, the potential consequences. You come to an understanding of what's worth expending energy on and what is not. I think that is pretty typical of any reporting relationship. However, some folks will advocate too long and damage the relationship and you have to know where that line ends where you're respected for advocating and when you go beyond and are confrontational or too negative.

Of the three school business managers, Ms. Joan was the least likely to reference conformity as an influence strategy. However, Mr. Mills suggested that it was a significant aspect of her efforts in establishing a cohesive working relationship with principals. As he described, “She would have a tendency to be more deferential, very likely to be less prone to forcefully state a position different than what the principal’s is.” By her own admission, Ms. Joan preferred to eschew conflict: “I don’t like disagreement. I like to make sure people are happy. That’s why I see my job as doing anything I can to make that happen.” Both Mr. Smith and Ms. Grant noted this about her personality, that she was “very agreeable, very personable.” Mr. Smith attributed these qualities as “the reason why she worked so well with all of the staff.”

Assuming Additional Tasks

As conceptualized the role of school business managers was intended to alleviate some of the work burden on principals to allow principals more time to focus on instruction. In defining the role, Lewis County Public Schools focused on the specific tasks associated with the job. While school business managers and principals associated these tasks with the general responsibilities and authority of the position, data suggest that school business managers deliberately sought out additional tasks as a means to establish their credibility with principals and forge effective work relationships with them.

According to Ms. Joan, assuming tasks beyond her designated duties was something she engaged in as a regular part of her role as a school business manager:

You have to be willing to do whatever is needed for the students and staff of the building. I try to do, I guess I don’t mind helping out, I

don't mind getting involved. Helping out with things. I just step in when I see a need some place. I don't go by my job description.

She offered that this was important, especially to the principals for whom she worked:

"They have so much they are responsible; they can't do it alone. I think they appreciate having someone who is willing to help." When asked to elaborate on a specific example she referenced an incident with a "disgruntled parent" regarding a custody issue. Although "this isn't something in my job description, I saw that the principal needed some help." While the principal tried to manage the parent, "I went through the student's file to see exactly what we had, did some research on the situation to try to get him information to make a good decision." According to her, "I just act in situations like that but I think it helps build relationships with the principal, when we know we are working together."

Ms. Joan was explicit in sharing how she assumed additional tasks to negotiate her role. "When I started with Kim, I wanted to be more than the secretary so I tried to take on any jobs I could to help her. It was a way for me to establish myself in the role." Ms. Joan also noted:

Even though I have been doing this job for years, it is the same when start with a new principal. It is important to do what I have always done but also to find the new things that are important to that person.

For Ms. Joan, seeking out tasks that assisted the principal demonstrated that, "I care about my work and my role is important to the school."

Ms. Strong also referenced examples of tasks she engaged in that were outside the expected parameters of her role. In particular, she identified master scheduling:

I think many people would look at that and say that is instructional, you should stay out of that. But I became pretty involved in that because related to that are room assignments, organization of the building in general, the bell schedule. When I started at Essex High School there was what I would call a very manual, time intensive, labor-intensive development of the master schedule. . . if you had to change or evaluate a change, it was just very difficult. So I offered to the principal to take what they had been doing manually and placed it in a spreadsheet. Through the process of doing that, it made me have a much better understanding of everything that is involved in that and therefore I think made me someone with a valued input to that process. I don't delude myself, the first advantage for the principal is that she didn't have to do this work anymore. It is the type of activity that I enjoy and my organizational and analytical skills help in that process. So I can point out to the issues and in addition to just not just developing a prettier chart that showed them the classes, I also provided analysis on the number of students in classrooms, recommended number of sections that we believed we would need. So again, this was very time consuming but I enjoyed doing it so I would spend many hours after school to get it done because there is no way that you could do that in, so after the normal workday which is usually would have been a ten hour work day, I would stay and put a lot of work in that master schedule.

Ms. Grant acknowledged the value of Ms. Strong's effort: "Grace sometimes had a perspective to see things that the other members of my leadership team did not. Take scheduling, for example. She created a spreadsheet system that changed how we did that work. It was extremely helpful." Ms. Grant referenced Ms. Strong's ability to assess situations, her "perspective," frequently suggesting that she lent that in many areas: "Grace always had an informed perspective that helped me. I came to learn that I could rely on her for clear thinking about issues that were not necessarily part of her job."

Although Mr. Stevens was least likely to identify additional tasks as a means to negotiate his role, it was evident in his and principals' responses. According to Mr. Hall:

Ken developed the interpersonal relations with people and I think people did the job with and for him because they liked him bottom line. They liked working with him because he had that easy-going nature. He would pitch in and actually do the job with you. For example when we did graduation we had to set up the gymnasium, set up the 800 chairs. Ken was right in there with everybody setting up chairs. He was willing to do the "scut" work he expected of others and I think that got him a lot more respect and collaboration with the staff he directly supervised. I know I respected the fact that he didn't mind doing what needed to be done.

According to Mr. Smith, "Ken is pretty new here but he has already proven that he doesn't mind working hard, putting in the hours and helping where ever I need him."

In describing his workday Mr. Stevens referenced an example of a need he identified and his effort to address it:

One of Doug's larger initiatives is to create better school spirit. So, I am going to try and make the school more inviting by more school spirit in the traditional sense, having more banners, more stuff around the school so if you were plopped down in the middle of the building somewhere, you can look on a wall and see Essex High School, a banner that gives the students some inspiration for being a part the organization I guess.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings associated with identifying the tensions that emerged with the implementation of the school business manager position and the strategies employed by the two actors most directly associated with that implementation, principals and school business managers themselves. Analysis of data confirms that tensions did indeed emerge and that principals and school business managers employed differing strategies to navigate their respective roles and their relationship. A number of recommendations for practice and for further research were drawn from these findings and are presented in Chapter 6, as are conclusions reached as a result of this study.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Study Relevance

The role of principal in K-12 public education is a complicated undertaking. Contemporary principals maneuver in a complex landscape due to increased accountability, diminished resources, and competing demands. Embracing the challenge of educating the country's youth is not merely a mantra for leaders in this role. Rather, the vast majority of principals indicate that they "should be held accountable for everything that happens to the children in his or her school" (Heitin, 2013, p.1). Considering the magnitude of this task, however, it is not surprising that principals frequently indicate that they "feel under great stress several days a week" (Heitin, 2013, p. 1), a reality that is precipitating a shortage in high-quality school leadership (Danielson, 2007; MSDE 2009).

Educational theorists have suggested that traditional models that consolidate leadership in the role of one individual, namely the principal, are insufficient to meet the needs of school organizations. Instead of the single "heroic" leader that has been the practice in schools, contemporary theorists are advancing models that share leadership more broadly (Donaldson, 2006; Elmore, 2000; Gronn, 2003; Harris, 2008; Lashway, 2002; Leithwood et al, 2006; Marzano et al, 2005; Spillane, 2006). The school business manager position proposed by the Maryland State Department of Education was designed to remove some of the traditional tasks associated with managerial aspects of schools from principals. This reallocation of tasks inevitably impacts decision-making and locating the new position as a member of the leadership team suggests a model for sharing leadership.

In educational settings moving from conceptualization to implementation of an initiative invariably results in unintended consequences. The actualization of the school business manager position in Lewis County Public Schools had precisely that effect as the addition of the new position impacted traditional leadership paradigms and organization dynamics. Micropolitical theory suggests that change can precipitate tensions, which, in turn, can impact the effectiveness of reform (Ball, 1987; Blasé, 1991; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Malen, 1995; Reed, 2000). The implementation of the school business manager in Lewis County Public Schools provides a context for exploring how principals and school business managers navigated the tensions that emerged as they attempted to actualize the new roles in their organizational settings. Developing an understanding of the dynamics involved in changing leadership paradigms is essential for fostering school improvement.

Study Context and Structure

The purpose of this study was to describe the implementation of the school business manager position in one Maryland school district, specifically to explore whether or not authority was reallocated with the redefinition of leadership roles and to identify tensions that emerged as the traditional leadership paradigm was altered by the addition of the new position. Specifically, the study sought to examine how principals and school business managers negotiated the tensions to enact their respective roles in their organizational context. Micropolitics served as the perspective for capturing not only how authority was impacted with the addition of the new role but also for identifying strategies actors used to forge their new positions. The questions that guided this study were:

1. How was the school business manager role conceptualized at the district level and how is it operationalized at the school site? Specifically, to what extent do principals and school business managers perceive that authority is reallocated?
2. What tensions emerge in the initial stages as principal and school business manager define their roles and relationship in their organizational setting?
3. How do principals and school business managers negotiate these tensions to operationalize their roles?

Using case study methodology, the study examined the implementation of the school business manager position in one school district, selecting three principals and three school business managers as the unit of analysis. Lewis County Public Schools was the first district in the state to fully implement the recommendation for the school business manager position thus providing a sustained effort to enact the role. Specific study participants were enlisted based on their longevity as school business managers in the county as that offered the greatest potential for a comprehensive understanding of the position and its impact on organizational dynamics of schools, both in terms of leadership and micropolitical strategies. All three of the school business managers worked with multiple principals, including at least two principals in common. This chapter includes a discussion of the major findings of the study, implications for further research, and recommendations for practice.

Discussion

Educational policy makers often offer strategies for public education leaders to improve their practices. While frequently grounded in research, the challenge is to

translate the expectations on paper to practice in the school setting. This may be either promising or threatening for established norms of leadership. Data from participants in this study suggested that both responses were the case with the implementation of the school business manager position in Lewis County Public Schools. A summary of the findings and a discussion of the resulting conclusions based on the study are addressed below.

Conceptualization and Actualization.

Findings reveal that all study participants articulated a similar understanding of the conceptual goal of the school business manager initiative, employing language reflective of the MSDE recommendation for “clearing the plate” so principals could focus more time on instruction (MSDE, 2000, p.1). Each participant could also broadly outline the responsibilities assigned to school business managers, tasks that generally reflected those included in the initial job description created by the county to further delineate the scope of responsibilities. This included references to broad managerial tasks such as facilities, maintenance, transportation, and fundraising. By all accounts from participants, the addition of the school business manager position in Lewis County Public Schools was well received as a concept that held potential for allowing principals to have time to be instructional leaders, the stated goal of the program implementation. All three principals in the study specifically identified increased time to focus on instruction as an outcome of the role while school business managers themselves clearly articulated that as the primary purpose of their role in the organizational setting.

While study participants clearly internalized the concept of the school business manager position, their perceptions of how it became actualized in practice proved to be less consistent. Study participants all reported the school business manager position was operationalized at their respective sites in accordance with the county job description. However, all also noted that actualizing it was not as simple as the shifting of tasks and formal authority granted through the official job description. Instead, study participants were consistent in their reflection that the initial implementation of the new position fostered challenges. In particular, findings from the data suggest that operationalizing the position was strongly contingent upon the receptiveness of the principal to the change initiative and the relationship school business managers were able to forge with that individual. Thus the implementation of the school business manager was not only a structural change to the normative authority of schools, it also activated micropolitical dynamics among the actors involved as they attempted to negotiate their new roles.

Data from the study suggests that an oversight in the conceptualization and actualization of the school business manager position impacted the micropolitical dynamics that emerged. Efforts in Lewis County Public School to implement the school business manager position focused on differentiation, outlining broadly how the work was to be allocated. However, there was little attention to integration, the coordination of the efforts once these responsibilities were parceled out, in effect, how the new school business manager position would work in concert with the principal in the leadership dynamic of the school. The inattention to integration was evident in the transition from concept to practice in the disparity in the training

provided for the implementation of the position. School business manager meeting minutes and interviews document extensive training, both initial and ongoing for school business managers. While two of the three managers in this study, Ms. Strong and Ms. Joan, were hired after the initial training, they still noted that the assistant superintendent for administrative services provided a comprehensive orientation that was followed by their regular meetings for additional coaching. Additionally, all three noted his availability in providing individual counsel or clarification to further their efforts to enact their positions in schools.

Significantly less attention as regards training and preparation for the new role was provided to school principals. Thus, while school business managers were being advised of the authority inherent in their new position, principals were relatively independent in navigating their changing roles and the shifting of authority to the new position. Inevitably, principals' individual interpretations and leadership orientations impacted their understanding and receptiveness to the new dynamic initiated by the change. As Bolman and Deal note, often the most "overlooked in the training loop are the change agents responsible for promoting and guiding the change (2008, p. 381). This was the case with principals in Lewis County Public Schools. Bolman and Deal (2008) state: "Organizational change is a complex systemic undertaking. It rarely works to retrain people without revising roles or to revamp roles without retraining" (p. 377). The limited retraining for principals proved to be a catalyst for the initiation of tensions at the onset of the program and impacted the role of the school business manager as it limited some principals' understanding of how to engage with the new role. The oversight in training principals was not unique at the

onset of the program; rather, it remains a reality in the continued implementation as evidenced in Mr. Smith's experience as principal new to the county and the school business manager model. The absence of systemic training for principals prevented a shared understanding of how to move from conceptual ideal to actualization.

Authority

The implementation of the school business manager position in Lewis County Public Schools had an impact on the allocation of formal authority in each school setting. Authority, formal power that is legitimized through an official role or position, is an important component of organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Gamson, 1968; Luthans, 1995; Pfeffer, 1981; Weber, 1947) and is the most obvious form of power (Morgan, 2006). In schools, authority has traditionally been associated with the role of principal, who by virtue of positional power at the apex of the organization, has been the binding decision-maker (Hallinger, 1992). The introduction of the school business manager challenged this normative expectation. Although it was clear in the county job description that the school business manager position was subordinate to that of the principal, the description also stipulated that the school business manager would serve as the principal's designee for areas outlined in the job expectations thus conferring a level of authority for those areas to the school business manager.

According to school business managers, the extent to which authority was shared or distributed was initially contingent upon the principal with whom they were working. For example, Ms. Strong identified Ms. Grant as more receptive to the role and more likely to sanction the authority of the school business manager than Mr.

Hall, who consistently expressed his desire to maintain control of power in his school setting through his references to his formal authority. Mr. Stevens collaborated the fact that Mr. Hall was less inclined to empower school business managers with authority at the onset of the new position. So while the county clearly established an outline of school business managers' authority in the formal job description, within their respective schools, principals had significant control of the extent to which that happened, especially in the initial implementation. The findings of this study confirmed extant research that merely changing the structural configuration of a school organization does not equate to a shared or distributive approach to leadership (Hallinger, 1992; Louis et al, 2010). Instead, principals play a significant role in determining the degree to which authority will actually be enacted and by whom at their school site. As with most change initiatives in schools, principals play a significant role in determining the extent to which the change will be implemented (Camburn, Rowan & Taylor, 2003; Harris, 2005).

Power is not often acknowledged by practioners in schools (Achinstein, 2002; Hoyle, 1982; Marshall & Scribner, 1991; Mawhinney, 1999). Generally, school business mangers were reluctant to discuss their power, even as manifested in their formal authority. However, data from the study do confirm that despite the initial difficulty with negotiating the new role and establishing their actual authority as outlined in their job descriptions, school business managers did eventually develop as decision makers within their sphere of control. While they initially had little control of the duties that were assigned to them, they did develop authority over specific tasks as they enacted their roles at the school site. This they accomplished through

deliberate efforts to establish the value of their role and to initially align themselves with the principal and his or her direction. School business managers did concede that they had a greater level of autonomy after the initial stages of forging their role, noting that “work” had to be done to earn the principal’s willingness to grant them a level of authority. This was highlighted in the comparison of Ms. Joan’s experience to that of Mr. Stevens and Ms. Strong. Ms. Joan was the only study participant to already have worked with her principal prior to becoming a school business manager. Her familiarity with the principal and school setting afforded her greater authority at the onset of her assuming the role. In contrast, Mr. Steven and Ms. Strong conveyed the need for more significant negotiation to actualize their authority in settings and with principals who were new to them. Thus school business manager authority had to be earned through relationship building rather than just conferred through their job title. This is consistent with research that suggests that an established relationship is more likely to produce shared leadership (Blasé & Anderson, 1995; Gronn, 2002; Harris 2005; Pearce & Sims, 2000). Also consistent among the school business managers in the study was their perception that their authority evolved beyond the scope outlined in the job matrix as they established themselves with the principal and the school context. This they attributed to their identifying additional areas of need and responding to those areas.

Principals had a greater tendency to imply that they maintained oversight of school business managers’ actions and thus their authority then school business manager identified. Principals suggested that through their frequent “communications” and meetings they could insure that they were informed of school

business managers' decisions and the alignment of these decisions with their direction. While it was clear from the onset of the position that school business managers would report to the school principal and thus be subordinate to his or her direction, the reality of the position in practice did not afford such oversight. Principals were initially intent upon maintaining their power and control as evident in their frequent references to their own authority. However, over time, they failed to recognize the scope of control over specific areas that they ceded to the school business manager. Principals did not seem cognizant of the range of issues for which school business managers made binding decisions. This was reflected in the fact that school business managers identified a more extensive range of issues in regards to which they independently made binding decisions than the principals articulated. While principals could identify broad areas of school business manager responsibilities, none were specific as to the day-to-day decisions school business managers were making on their behalf. Findings from the study suggest that while initial oversight may have been enacted, this faded as the school business managers established themselves. In effect, longevity as a school business manager appears to correlate to greater authority afforded the position.

Tensions

Change in organizations can precipitate tensions that reflect actors' efforts to maintain their preferred outcomes or reflect the discomfort associated with new initiatives (Ball, 1987; Blasé, 1991; Bolman & Deal, 2008). The most obvious tension that emerged from the perspective of both principals and school business managers was principals' reluctance to cede control of tasks to school business

managers. All three principals cited this explicitly as the most difficult aspect of implementing the new role. For each of the principals, giving up power for tasks that were previously their responsibility was a challenge, consistent with previous research that suggests that threats to established power are a barrier to change (Achinstein, 2002, Blasé & Anderson, 1995; Newton & Tarrant, 1992). For Mr. Hall and Mr. Smith, this was primarily founded in their belief that as principal they were ultimately responsible for all aspects of the school and shifting power to another would in some manner diminish their authority. For Ms. Grant, the difficulty was associated with just “getting the job done,” what Newton & Tarrant (1992) identify as a reluctance to let go of control. For all three-school principals, another aspect of their hesitance to cede control was just a lack of understanding as to how the change impacted their role. School business managers were keenly aware of the difficulty and the impact it had initially in their efforts to execute their role.

Despite the overt expression of their initial reluctance to cede control, principals espoused an egalitarian approach to leadership when asked about their leadership style. Specifically they suggested that decisions making was collaborative in nature. However, data from the study suggest that there were inconsistencies in school business managers’ perceptions of principals’ collaborative stance. School business managers presented a much more nuanced perspective of principals leadership styles and how that impacted their authority in the organization. School business managers articulated their ability to assess the leadership styles of the principals with whom they worked, thus being able to “map the political terrain” in which they worked (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The two secondary school business managers referenced the

value of recognizing principals' preferences and styles as a means of modifying their own efforts in the leadership dynamic. This astuteness fostered their ability to activate influence strategies that correlated to the greatest possible success in their ability to impact their principal. Thus, they had an understanding of the best strategy to influence their desired outcome. Literature relative to the concept of influence indicates that individuals modify their strategies depending upon the target of their request and or the object or goal of their request (Kipnis et al., 1980). School business managers in this study underscored their reliance on this effort as they practiced their roles in school. Specifically, Mr. Stevens referenced this is his perception that "team" was important to both Mr. Hall and Mr. Smith. Much of Mr. Stevens' interview data evidenced that in response to this understanding, he sought to align himself with the direction of his principal, in effect to be a team player, which both principals noted as a strength for him. His recognition that Mr. Hall did not mind eschewing the rules to meet his objectives also informed his understanding of when to avoid an influence attempt, "sometimes it just wasn't worth trying to change his mind." Ms. Strong conveyed her astuteness in recognizing the receptiveness of her target by references that included "knowing your principal" and also recognizing when to concede to their preferences.

Blasé and Anderson (1995) contextualize power relationships in organizations in three categories: power over, power through, power with. Data from the study suggest that Mr. Hall's interactions with his school business managers reflected power over or positional power, the leadership focus least likely to foster a shared leadership model such as that of the school business manager. This was supported by

his frequent references to his authority and his control of communication and agendas. Mr. Smith's style was more akin to power through, evidencing some efforts to facilitate leadership. However, his focus reflects more of an additive approach to distributing leadership, locating the school business manager's leadership in task allocation without much effort for interaction beyond the scope of that work (Gronn, 2002). In contrast, data suggests that Ms. Grant would most appropriately reflect the ideal of power with, adopting a holistic approach to sharing leadership in which interdependent relationships were established with her school business managers (Gronn, 2002). This was reflected in her language that spoke to seeking perspectives from her school business managers on a wide range of issues and school business managers' reflection of the level of inclusion they felt as a member of her team.

Like school business managers, principals also recognized that differences in leadership styles precipitated tensions as they worked to enact the school business manager role. This was most pronounced for Mr. Hall and Mr. Smith who found Ms. Strong's focus on maintaining policy and procedures a conflict to their own decision-making process. In contrast, the "team" designation they applied to Mr. Stevens made them more receptive to his efforts as did Ms. Joan's quality of wanting to assist. Ms. Grant was the only principal who suggested that disparate leadership styles offered an opportunity to reflect on different perspectives for more informed decision-making. Findings indicate that school business managers had to be more responsive to adopting strategies that accommodated the principal leadership style than vice versa. Inability to do so was more likely to result in the removal of the school business manager than in the principal having to modify his/her style as

evident in the “misfires” at the start of the initiative. In this respect, principals had more opportunity to maintain their practices as regards leadership than to have to adopt to more collaborative efforts.

Trust, a key factor in adopting a more collaborative approach to leadership and effective teamwork (Barth, 2001; Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003; Covey, 1989; Gronn, 2001; LaFasto & Larson, 2001; MacBeath, 2005; Smylie, Mayrowetz, Muprphy & Seashore-Louis, 2007), was a recurrent theme. In keeping with previous literature, the findings illustrate that trust is a significant micropolitical tension that impacts school reform efforts such as the implementation of the school business manager position (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Trust emerged as a concern on the part of all participants in the initial stages of implementing the school business manager position. Mr. Hall equated trust with loyalty, a quality he measured by school business managers’ aligning themselves with his direction. Trust was the most significant issue for him in his work with Ms. Strong whom he believed placed allegiance to the Central Office directive more than to his own. Her seeking guidance from someone other than him was perceived to be a betrayal of trust. While Mr. Smith did not have the same concerns with the reporting structure as Mr. Hall conveyed, he too implied a correlation between trust and alliance with his expectations. Ms. Grant had a different understanding of trust, conveying it more through her receptiveness to school business managers’ differing perspectives and the efforts she made to empower them with authority to enact their roles.

School business managers focused on trust as a tension more in terms of the

support they had or did not have from principals to do their work, equating trust with the confidence principals placed in them to accomplish their tasks and make binding decisions. School business managers suggested that trust developed over time in their working relationships with principals, often through their efforts to comply with principal expectations or to prove themselves a valuable resource to the principal. Thus, while trust was an important tension for all participants, the definition of what it was varied with the perspective of the individual.

Strategies to Negotiate Tensions

Principals in the study identified with three consistent strategies for negotiating the tensions that emerged in the initial implementation of the school business manager position. These strategies suggest that principals relied on a structural response for making sense of their changing roles. This included tightening boundaries through the creation of job matrices, determining the extent to which school business managers had access to and/or opportunities to contribute to leadership team, and the control of communication. Each of these strategies was linked to principals' authoritative power within the organization. For two of the principals, the strategies were enacted to protect their power whereas one principal used the same strategies to grant power.

All principals referenced the use of school specific job matrices as a strategy for navigating the new role definitions initiated with the addition of the school business manager. While the county provided a job description, principals in this study each created their own to share with staff as a means of identifying the specific tasks and

thus areas of authority for members of the leadership team. Review of these documents suggests that while principals adopted the broad outlines of the county description, additional tasks specific to their schools were included. Principals in the study identified the job matrix as significant in helping teachers and other staff members know who was responsible for which aspects of the school organization. While their language suggested their efforts to clearly define the authority of the school business managers, there is also a suggestion that two of the principals saw it as a means to re-enforce their own continued authority. In contrast, Ms. Grant's description that "I tried to put more under my assistant principals and school business manager and I just jump in as needed" reflects her effort to empower those who worked with her.

Another strategy principals utilized was the leadership team construct. MSDE's model explicitly locates the school business manager position as a member of the leadership team of schools, a role also inherent in the conceptualization of the model in Lewis County Public Schools. Principals understood this component as evidenced in their reference to school business managers being included on their team, but school business managers offer a more nuanced description of the manner in which this was actualized in practice. Ms. Joan and Ms. Strong concurred in their perception that they were most fully included as members of the school leadership team when working with Ms. Grant. As a result, they said they understood the vision and goals of their principal and could thus act in alignment with that in carrying out the responsibilities of their position. Under Ms. Grant, they both described how their

opinions were sought and valued in that capacity, informing decision outcomes in a collaborative fashion, one reflective of the intent of distributive leadership.

In contrast, all three school business managers noted that while they were included on the leadership team in schools with Mr. Smith, their capacity as such was more narrow, as their participation was limited to those issues that specifically fell within their span of control. On this leadership team, they reported on issues that pertained to their duties and were then dismissed from the meeting. This is significant considering Mr. Smith's own concessions that issues often "bleed over." Thus school business managers' restricted access to the decision-making arena created a potential gap in their information base for fulfilling their roles. School business managers also noted their limited participation on the leadership team in their work with Mr. Hall. While Mr. Hall was most effusive in his references to his communication and inclusion of school business managers as members of his leadership team, Ms. Strong and Mr. Stevens offered a different perspective. In their estimation, while they were included in meetings, Mr. Hall's style was such that the communication was primarily directive rather than collaborative. Thus, they were in a position more to respond rather than contribute in decision outcomes. Unlike their inclusion with Ms. Grant, access to the leadership team with Mr. Hall and Mr. Smith suggests more delegation of tasks than a distribution of leadership.

Access to the decision-making arena is a critical component in power dynamics (Bolman & Deal, 2008). In Lewis County Public Schools, the leadership team is that officially designated decision-making arena at the school level. By limiting access to the leadership team, principals asserted their authority to determine which actors

would have the capacity to influence decision-making. Conversely, inviting school business manager's participation as Ms. Grant appeared to do, signaled not only her receptiveness to a more collaborative leadership approach but opportunity for school business managers to assert influence. For either purpose, to promote or restrict influence, principals maintained the authoritative power to decide the degree of access school business managers would have.

Communication is a critical condition for promoting shared leadership (Gronn, 2001). Principals in the study noted that communication was an important strategy as they negotiated their role with school business managers. All principals described communication as a process through which they initially conveyed their expectation and direction for school business managers' work. Communication, however, also served as a means to assert principal authority or provide a mechanism for sharing it with school business managers. Both Mr. Hall and Mr. Smith suggested that they communicated frequently with their school business managers on important issues, implying a back and forth exchange of information. However, school business managers did not fully endorse their view. In particular, Mr. Hall professed to promote "open-lines of communication" with his school business managers whereas school business managers characterized his efforts as directive rather than participatory. Both Mr. Stevens and Ms. Strong characterized communication with Mr. Smith as often cursory. In contrast, Ms. Grant emerged as the most open to communication. Ms. Grant's own references to communication as well as school business manager perception suggest that she used communication as a multi-

directional tool so that she and school business managers could learn from each other to inform decision-making.

Like principals, school business managers employed strategies to navigate the conflicting space between leading and subordination as they attempted to forge their roles and establish working relationships with principals. Findings indicate that school business managers adopted strategies more associated with influence than authority in the power dynamic. Their efforts consistently demonstrated attempts to establish the value of their position to the organization and specifically to the principal as well as forging a positive relationship with their principal. Consistent with findings from other researchers, this study found that school business managers attempted to minimize tensions through the application of micropolitical strategies associated with collaboration (Ball, 1987; Blasé, 1991; Blasé & Anderson, 1995, Morgan, 2006; Pfeffer, 1981).

Like principals, school business managers cited communication as a strategy that was important for navigating the initial tensions. However, there was a distinction in the type of communication and the purpose of it. School business managers used communication initially as a strategy to learn their role and the preferences of the principals with whom they were working. All school business managers in the study equated communication with listening. Listening served as a strategy for insuring their understanding not only of the scope of their work but how best to accomplish it in their organizational settings and with the principals with whom they worked. School business managers also referenced communication as a means to keep principals informed of their work at the onset of initiating their roles. This effort

allowed them to establish their contributions and also to signal their effort engage in their work in a manner consistent with the principal's expectations. Per all school business managers, this application of communication faded as they served in their role.

School business managers identified conformity most significantly as a strategy at the onset of their relationship with principals. Conformity is defined as "the display of professional and personal qualities perceived to be consistent with the formal (policies, rules) and informal (requests) expectations of the principal" (Blasé & Anderson, 1995, p. 87). This strategy by school business managers aligned with their role in the hierarchy of the organization, establishing their cohesion with the direction set by the principal and policy and procedures in place in the district and school site.

According to the business managers conformity gave way to greater reliance on diplomacy as a strategy as school business managers established themselves in the organization. Diplomacy, which privileges knowledge and adherence to policy and procedure, also incorporates a relational dynamic that honors sharing of ideas and the ability to communicate effectively (Blasé & Anderson, 1995; Kipnis et al, 1980). It includes the use of logical arguments and factual evidence to show a proposal or request is feasible and relevant for attaining important task objectives (Yukl, 2006).

The prevalence of conformity and diplomacy as influence strategies suggests that school business managers were more inclined to employ unobtrusive execution of power as a means to inform a decision outcome in their organizational settings. Power is frequently perceived as a negative concept in school organizations. Its

implication of conflict and diverse coalitions suggest the need to conceal rather than embrace its potential. Examination of school business managers' use of power in their roles suggests their conscious efforts to employ influence strategies that legitimate and rationalize their efforts rather than evidencing more overt attempts at executing power. The use of conformity and diplomacy as the primary influence strategies employed by school business managers was an important factor in ensuring that the decision-making process did not produce power struggles and conflicts.

Recommendations

Redefining authority with the creation of the school business manager position in Lewis Count Public Schools precipitated tensions between the actors charged with actualizing it in practice. The findings from this study of one district's attempt to share authority more broadly have implication for policy and practice.

- District leadership should include principals in the conceptualization of new initiatives such as the school business manager role that seek to alter traditional leadership paradigms in schools. It is essential to secure principal understanding and support for the effort as their roles are directly impacted. As the authoritative head of schools, principals can either foster change or serve as barriers to its implementation. Principals need to recognize that “there is no loss of power and influence” when leadership is shared more broadly (Leithwood, et al., 2006, p. 13).
- Establish clear job responsibilities for the school business manager and principal and provide comprehensive training for both parties that focuses on

differentiation and integration of the two roles. Merely changing job descriptions without training on how new roles are to interact with each other creates the potential for conflict (Bolman & Deal, 2008) and training that focuses on how to engage collaboratively in constructive leadership practices can promote more effective teams (Pearce, 2004).

- Districts should also outline accountability for enacting the change to support implementation from concept to actual practice. Efforts to change the authoritative structure of schools frequently results in more rhetoric than actual practice (Court, 2003; Louis et al., 2010; O'Toole, Galbraith, & Lawler, 2002) or implementation that is more delegation than change in actual authority (Achinstein, 2002; Harris, 2005; Watson & Scribner, 2007).
- Cultivate relationship building. Initially this may revolve around establishing new roles and responsibilities for the school business manager position. This initial effort, however, must be continued as a practice to reflect on successes and problems, to establish collaboration in implementing change. This supports research that suggests that trusting and authentic relationships are imperative in organizations and are built through frequent conversations (Blasé & Blasé, 2001, Crowther et al, 2002; Fullan, 2001, 2008; Gronn, 2001; Harris, 2008; Lambert, 2002).
- Recognize that any change initiative will result in tensions as the actors involved encounter threats to established norms of practice in their organizational settings (Ball, 1987; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Malen, 1995; Sims, 2002). In response, actors will engage in micropolitical maneuvering. Being

cognizant of strategies employed to negotiate the tensions that emerge offers the potential for constructive change rather than the creation of new barriers.

Recommendation for Further Research

The demands on public school principals to provide instructional leadership are not going to diminish. If anything, they will continue to be augmented by new initiatives and challenges. Thus, further research regarding school leadership and efforts to share it more broadly are necessary for identifying promising practices. This study represented an initial exploratory analysis of the implementation of the school business manager position as one such model. The study focused on one school district's implementation of the initiative with a small subset of actors represented. As a small, rural district, it is quite feasible that the actualization of the school business manager role would be quite different in a larger district with different organizational structures and expectations. This could result in a variance in the type of tensions that emerge and the strategies actors use to navigate them. Additional studies that represented different contexts and a larger sample would be beneficial for furthering the findings of this exploratory study.

While this study included both elementary and secondary examples of implementation of the school business manager position, analysis of data did not seek to explicitly identify the potential factors associated with the grade level configuration and how that might influence participant responses. In this study, fewer tensions appeared to emerge with partnerships at the elementary level but the sample size was too small to draw conclusions as to whether this was just an outcome of the individuals involved or if there were some inherent difference in the demands of

secondary and elementary institutions that influenced this. Further studies that compared implementation of the leadership change at the different levels could offer potential insights into the specific challenges at each level.

Research that focuses on the interplay of gender may have potential significance in furthering an understanding of how changing structural roles impacts how leadership and power are enacted in school organizations. In this particular study, both Ms. Strong and Ms. Joan offered insights that their perceptions of their authority and influence in their organizations were different when working with a male or female principal. Studies that seek to isolate how gender impacts power dynamics in school organizations could advance an understanding of both the concepts of leadership and power.

Appendices

Appendix A

Superintendent Interview Conceptualization and Actualization

1. When and how did you first hear about the concept of the school business manager?
 - Why did you decide to pursue this model in your county?
 - Who was involved in the initial design of the position?
 - What was your role in the design and implementation of the school business model?
 - What were the logistics to getting this position implemented?
 - What resources were needed to implement the position and how were they secured?
2. Was there any resistance to the implementation of the model from
 - principals
 - school board
 - community
3. What do you think are essential qualifications for someone seeking the role of school business manager?
4. What training do school business managers receive from the county relative to the position? What training do school leaders receive for implementing the position?
5. What do you see as the primary responsibilities of the school business manager? What authority does a school business manager have in the school setting?
6. What do you see as the school business manager's responsibilities specific to
 - a. teachers
 - b. students
 - c. parents
 - d. community
 - e. central office?
7. How would you describe the position of the school business manager in relation to the leadership team in a school setting?

8. What has been the greatest benefit of the school business manager implementation in your county?
9. Have there been any unintended consequences of the SBM position?
10. To what would you attribute the success of the SBMs who have been with the program since its inception?
11. Is there anything else about the SBM position from your perspective as a Superintendent that you think would be important for me to know?

Appendix B

Assistant Superintendent Interview Conceptualization and Actualization

1. When and how did you first hear about the concept of the school business manager?
 - Why did your county decide to pursue this model?
 - Who was involved in the initial design of the position?
 - What was your role in the design and implementation of the school business model?
 - What were the logistics to getting this position implemented? What resources were needed to implement the position and how were they secured?
2. Was there any resistance to the implementation of the model from
 - principals
 - school board
 - community?
3. What do you think are essential qualifications for someone seeking the role of school business manager?
4. What training do school business managers receive from the county relative to the position? What training do school leaders receive for implementing the position?
5. What do you see as the primary responsibilities of the school business manager? What authority does a school business manager have in the school setting?
6. What do you see as the school business manager's responsibilities specific to
 - teachers
 - students
 - parents
 - community
 - central office?
7. How would you describe the position of the school business manager in relation to the leadership team in a school setting?
 - Leadership style?
 - How would you describe the authority a school business manager has?
 - Influence they have on decision-making?
8. To what do you attribute the success of the three SBMs in this study?

9. Have there been any unintended consequences to implementing the position of the SBM?
10. What has been the greatest benefit of the school business manager implementation in your county?
11. What do you see as the next steps for improving the program?
12. Who is responsible for the supervision of the school business manager? How are SBMs evaluated?

Appendix C

Principal Interview #1 Conceptualization and Actualization

1. Describe your experience as an educator.
 - Training and teaching experience?
 - How many years have you been a school principal?
 - Has your experience all been in your current placement? If not, describe your previous experience.
2. How many years have you worked with a school business manager?
 - How many SBMs have you worked with and how many years did you work with each?
 - In what settings did you work with each?
3. Based on your experience, how would you describe the role of the SBM?
4. What are the SBM's responsibilities specific to
 - principal
 - teachers
 - students
 - parents
 - community
 - central office?
5. Describe a typical day for your SBM in your school.
6. The job description indicates that the SBM is responsible for the non-instructional aspects of the school functioning. Are there any other tasks you assign your school business manager that you have not shared yet that would help me understand the role of a SBM in your school? How are these responsibilities communicated to your SBM, other staff?
7. Describe the types of interactions you might have with your SBM during the course of a typical workday.
8. How would you describe the SBM's role in the leadership team of your school? Who else serves on the leadership team of your school?
9. Do you have experience as a principal working without a school business manager? If so, what do you see as the primary difference in having a SBM?

10. What would you say is the greatest benefit of having a school business manager?
11. Are there any specific challenges to working with a school business manager?
12. In your experience, what qualities are important in a school business manager?
13. What suggestions would you have for improving the role of the school business manager?

Appendix D

School Business Manager Interview #1 Conceptualization and Actualization

1. How many years have you been a school business manager?
2. Why did you seek a position as a school business manager?
3. What training, if any, did (does) the county provide you for fulfilling your role as a school business manager? What prior training, if any, do you have that you find beneficial for your work as a school business manager?
4. How would you describe the role of a school business manager in your county?
5. What are the main responsibilities of your job as a SMB based on your work experience in this county?
6. What are your responsibilities specific to
 - teachers
 - students
 - parents
 - community
 - central office?
7. What are the aspects of your job that you devote the most time to within a given week?
8. Describe a typical workday as a SBM in your school.
9. The job description indicates that the SBM is responsible for the non-instructional aspects of the school functioning. Are there any other tasks you are assigned that you have not shared yet that would help me understand the role of a SBM in your school? How are these responsibilities communicated to you?
10. How would you describe your role in the leadership team of your school? Who are the other members of the leadership team in your school?
11. Describe the types of interactions you might have with your principal during the course of a typical workday. With teachers? With district personnel?

12. If you have experience in another school as a school business manager, how do your responsibilities in this setting compare to your previous experience?
13. What do you find most interesting about your role as a school business manager?
14. Are there any specific challenges you face in your work as a school business manager?
15. What qualities would you say someone needs to be successful as a school business manager?
16. What, if anything, would you like to change about your role as a school business manager?
17. Is there anything else I should know about your work as a school business manager that we have not already covered?

Appendix E

School Business Manager Interview #2 Leadership Orientation/Power and Politics

1. Describe your relationship with your school principal.
 - What steps have you taken to establish a collaborative working relationship?
 - What efforts do you believe your principal has made to foster this?
 - What challenges, if any have there been in establishing your working relationship?
2. Have there been any particular issues on which you have been especially valuable to the principal of your school?
3. What issues, if any, have you encountered on which you and your principal have disagreed or had conflicting viewpoints?
 - How did you communicate this?
 - How were these issues resolved?
4. Describe your relationship with other staff members. Are there any specific successes or challenges you face in working with these individuals:
 - other administrators
 - teachers
 - support staff
 - central office?
5. How do you encourage others in your school to be successful in their work?
6. How do you build support from others for your efforts in your school?
 - principal
 - teachers
 - parents/community
7. What resistance, if any, have you encountered in your work from
 - administration
 - staff
 - parents/community?
8. What strategies do you implement to reduce this resistance?
9. Are there any particular issues or situations when you have tried to influence others in your organization?

10. How would you describe the formal authority you have as a school business manager in your school setting?
 - How does (did) your principal communicate to you the authority have in your school?
 - How did he/she establish with you the boundaries of your job?
11. What role do you play in establishing the policies and procedures for your school?
12. What responsibility do you have for holding individuals accountable for policies and procedures in your school?
 - Are there any specific policies or procedures for which you are responsible?
 - Are there any formal or informal rewards or incentives that you employ?
 - Are there any formal or informal consequences or sanctions that you can employ?
13. Describe your role in the evaluation of staff performance.
14. How would you describe the decision making process in your school?
15. Are there any particular decision making situations or issues that arise in your work that are more difficult than others to resolve? What strategies do you employ to manage these situations?
16. How is information shared among staff in your building? What type of information do you routinely need to share with teachers? Your principal? Parents and community?
 - How would you describe the informal communication channels in your school?
 - What role do you have in framing the communication that will be shared with others?
17. How are resources allocated in your school? If choices need to be made regarding resources, who is involved in that decision? What role, if any, do you have in that?
18. What role, if any, do you have in helping set the vision for your school? Are there any responsibilities that you have for specific strategies related to the school vision/mission?
19. If I were to talk to your principal, what would he/she identify as your personal strengths relative to your role as a school business manager? What would other staff members tell me?
20. What are the primary goals you hope to accomplish in your role as SBM?

21. Describe what you would consider to be some of your recent successes in your work.
22. How effective would you rate yourself in understanding the political aspects of your school organization?

Appendix F

Principal Interview #2 Leadership Orientation/Power and Politics

1. You completed the Leadership Orientation Survey regarding your SBMs. Reflecting on that, how would you say that their leadership style aligned or did not align with your leadership style?
2. Describe your relationship with your SBM.
 - What steps have you taken to establish a collaborative working relationship?
 - What efforts do you believe your SBM has made to foster this?
3. Have there been any particular issues on which the SBM has been especially valuable to you in your role as principal?
4. What issues, if any, have you encountered on which you and your SBM have disagreed or had conflicting viewpoints?
 - How did your SBM communicate this?
 - How were these issues resolved?
5. Have there been any specific issues on which your SBM has tried to influence you?
6. Describe your SBMs relationship with other staff members
 - other administrators
 - teachers
 - support staff
7. How does the SBM build support for his/her efforts in your school with
 - key players
 - teachers
 - parents/community?
8. What resistance, if any, do you think your SBM has encountered in his/her work from
 - staff
 - parents/community?
9. What strategies does he/she implement to reduce this resistance?
10. Are there any particular issues when your SBM has influenced others in your organization?

11. Describe the formal authority the school business manager has in your school setting.
 - How did you communicate with your SBM the authority he/she has in your school?
 - How did you establish with your SBM the boundaries of his/her job?
12. What role does your SBM play in assisting with the establishment of policies and procedures for your school?
13. What responsibility does your SBM have for holding individuals accountable for policies and procedures in your school?
 - Are there any specific policies or procedures for which he/she is responsible?
 - Are there any formal or informal rewards or incentives that your SBM employs?
 - Are there any formal or informal consequences or sanctions that your SBM can employ?
14. Does your SBM have a role in the evaluation of staff performance?
 - Who does he/she evaluate?
15. How would you describe the decision making process in your school?
 - What role, if any, does your SBM play in that effort?
 - What strategies does he/she as a member of the decision making team?
16. How is information shared among staff in your building? What type of information does the SBM routinely need to share with teachers? Parents and community?
 - Formal vs informal?
 - What role does he/she have in framing the issues?
17. How are resources allocated in your school? If choices need to be made regarding resources, who is involved in that decision?
18. What role, if any, does the SBM have in helping set the vision for your school? Are there any responsibilities that he/she has for specific strategies related to the school vision/mission?
19. Describe what you would consider to be some of your SBM's recent successes in his/her work.
20. What would you identify as your SBM's personal strengths relative to his/her role as a school business manager?

21. How effective would you rate your SMB in understanding the political aspects of your school organization?

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Meeting:	Date:
Present:	Time:
NOTES	REFLECTIONS

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